



Kentucky Post School Outcomes

Parent Involvement Report 2021

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

Table of Contents

Background.....	1
Methods	1
Items	2
Disaggregated Results.....	5
Open Ended Items.....	8
Discussion and Conclusions.....	12
Appendix A – Sample Letter to Parents	14
Appendix B – Parent Involvement Survey.....	15

Background

The 2021 Parent Survey was administered from February through July 2021. This was again extended from previous years at the request of several LEA's as well as the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE). KDE contracted with the Kentucky Post School Outcomes Center (KYPSO) 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 Post School Outcomes Center (KYPSO), the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) decided to include all parents of students with IEP's during the 2020-21 school year as participants in the study. The State Director of Special Education contacted local Directors of Special Education and provided instructions on how to contact parents to complete the survey. A sample letter was given 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 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 in person at the school at any time, including during the annual ARC meeting. The survey was made available in English, Spanish, and Arabic as were the sample letters to parents. See the appendix for copies of the survey and sample parent letter.

The survey could have potentially been distributed to parents of over 100,000 students with IEP's in the state of Kentucky. It was suggested that only one parent complete the survey per child. If parents had multiple children with IEP's they should fill out one survey for each child. 7,807 responses were completed and collected, the highest ever for this survey.

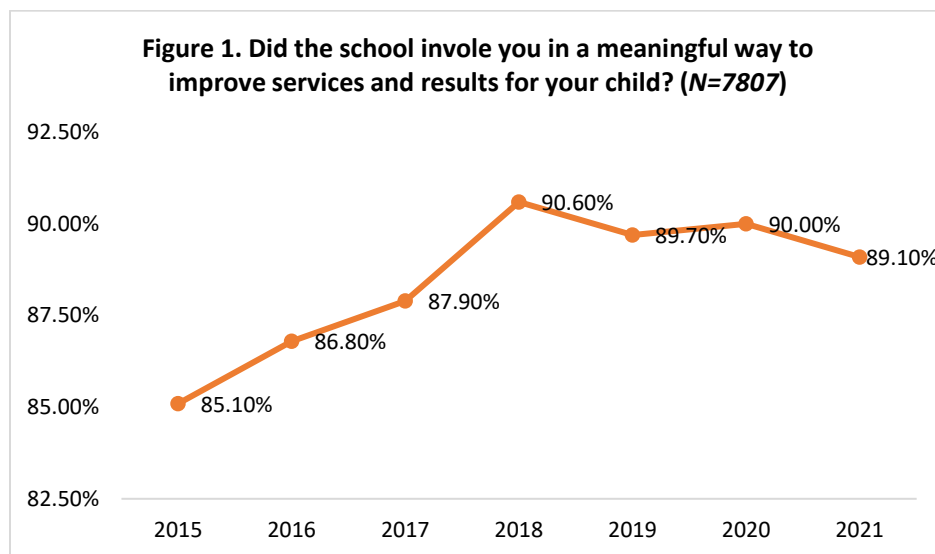
Results should be read with the understanding that all responses were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic. There were many different responses to how districts dealt with in-person vs. virtual learning, and many changed throughout the year. This altered instruction dramatically, and likely even contributed to the increased number of responses. Two new items were added to the survey based on this effect, specifically concerning the impact of virtual learning and the schools' efforts to communicate with parents.

Items

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

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 2021, **89.1%** of respondents gave an affirmative ("Yes") response. This continues a pattern of high rates which have remained around 90%. These include 2015 (85.10%), 2016 (86.8%), 2017 (87.9%), 2018 (90.6%), 2019 (89.7%), and 2020 (90.0%) (See Figure 1). 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.



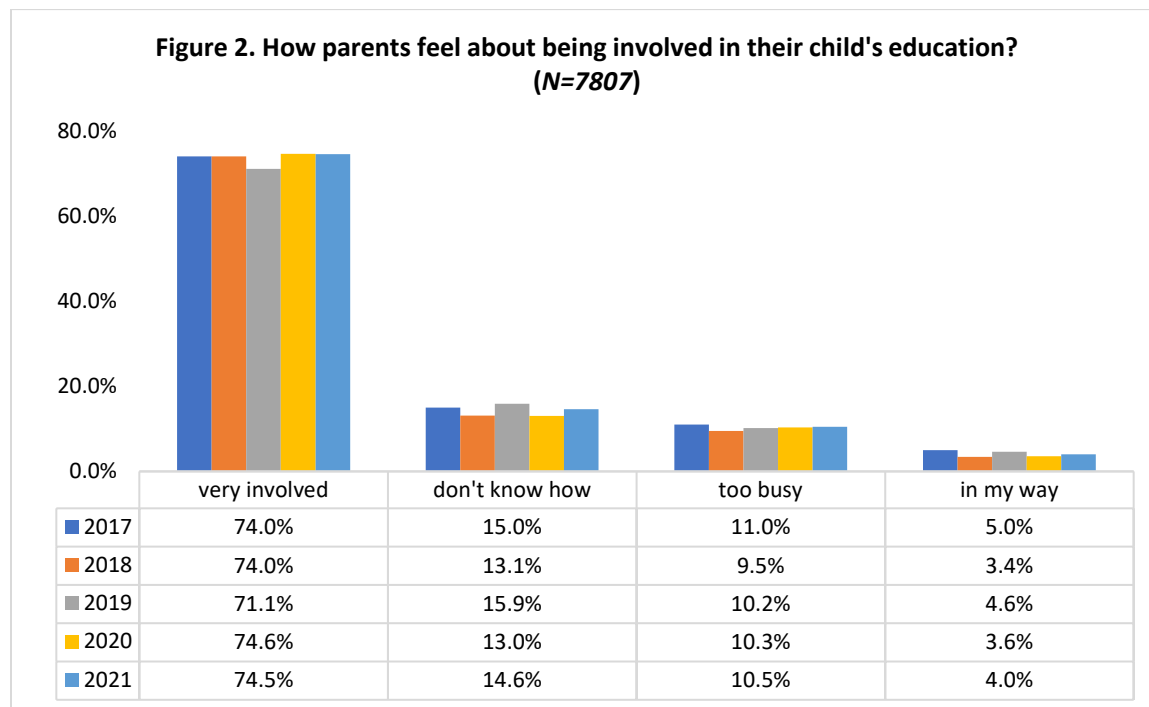
2. How well would you say that you understand the IEP process?

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 **4.24** on the five-point scale, indicating that parents who answered the survey believe they were knowledgeable about the IEP process. Over half of the **respondents (51.9%)** scored the item a "5." The percentage of respondents reporting full understanding of the IEP process remains similar to that of 2019 (54.0%) and 2020 (53.6%).

3. How do you feel about being involved in your child’s education?

A third item asked parents to describe how they feel about being involved in their child’s education. This was an item that allowed respondents to check any of four response options that applied to them. **74.5%** of parents said that they were very involved in their child’s education (Figure 2). 13.0% of respondents indicated that they wanted to be more involved but didn’t know how to be and 10.3% responded that they were too busy to be involved. 3.6% of respondents indicated that they preferred being involved in their child’s education in their own ways instead of getting help from the school. Note that respondents were able to select more than one answer. There is very little change from 2018 to 2020 (see Figure 2).



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

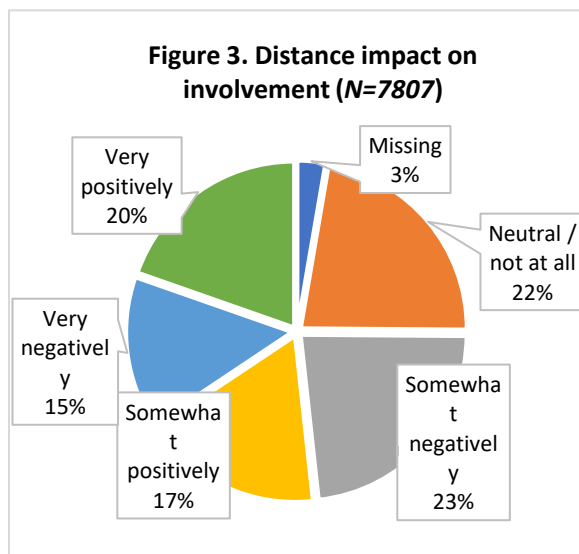
The survey then asked a question about how welcomed school staff made them feel in participating in their child’s education. In 2021, **90.1%** of the respondents reported feeling welcomed by school staff, which is slightly more favorable, yet similar, to 2010 (89.8%).

5. Has your school helped to prepare your son or daughter for future employment through vocational training (e.g., exploring jobs, paid work experiences)?

In the purpose of assessing the school’s involvement in planning for transition, this item was asked to parents of students who were 14 years or older ($N=1554$) about vocational training services. 744 responded “yes” and 517 responded “no” to this item. A high number of eligible respondents (293, or 19%) did not respond to this item, which may indicate a lack of knowledge among what vocational training services are being provided.

6. How did distance learning impact your involvement with your child’s school?

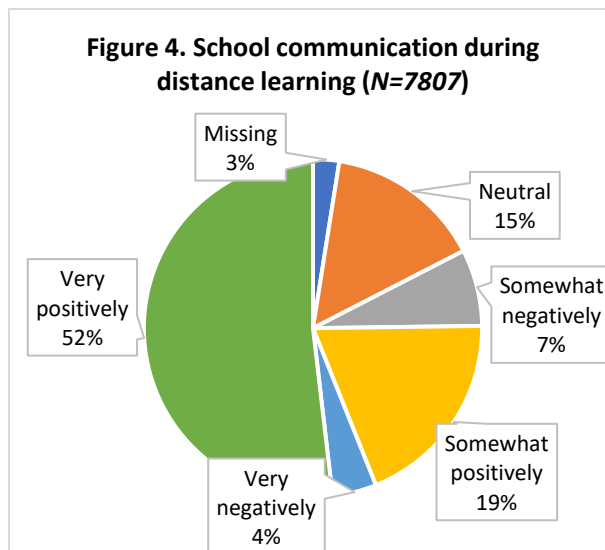
Given the tremendous influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, two more questions were added to assess the impact of distance learning on parents’ involvement and communication with schools about their child’s education. Both items used 5-point Likert-type items that included choices of neutral/not at all, somewhat negatively, somewhat positively, very negatively, and very positively.



Both items received a high (over 97%) response rate, with responses for the first item being fairly equal in percentage (Figure 3). About one quarter of respondents believed that distance learning impacted their involvement with the child’s school somewhat negatively.

7. How well did the school communicate with you during distance learning?

Among responses to the second “COVID-19 Item” about 51.9% of respondents had a very positive communication with the school during distance learning and only about 11% felt that the school communicated with them somewhat negatively or very negatively (Figure 4).



Disaggregated Results

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

Table 1 reports the item regarding overall meaningful involvement (used for Indicator 8), the level of understanding the IEP (mean ratings) and school staff being welcoming. Data are disaggregated by race, disability, and age in 2021. As shown, all the disaggregated groups of respondents reported high rates in meaningful school involvement (around 90%), in welcoming school staff (over 90%), and in understanding the IEP (mean > 4.00).

Among all the race groups, parents of Hispanic or Latino students reported the highest rates in meaningful school involvement (92.3%), parents of Pacific Island students in welcoming school staff (100.0%), and parents of Asian students in understanding the IEP (*mean* = 4.34).

The difference of responses by disability category was also very small in 2021. The overall involvement rate and welcoming staff rate were all around 90% and the mean of understanding the IEP were all above 4.18 out of 5. Like 2020, parents of children with speech/language impairment reported the highest involvement rate (92.5%); and parents of students with autism felt the most welcomed by school staff (94.9%).

Among all the five age groups, over 80% of parents of students in all age groups reported meaningful involvement and welcoming services from the school. The age

group of 19 and above showed the most favorable results for each question, but there is no significant difference among the age groups.

Table 1. Overall meaningful involvement, the level of understanding IEP (mean ratings) and school staff welcoming by race, disability, and age (N=7807).				
		School Involve parents meaningfully (%)	School Staff are Welcoming (%)	Understand IEP (Mean in 5)
Race	White (n = 5508)	89.4%	90.5%	4.26
	Black or African American (n = 567)	90.4%	91.1%	4.18
	Multiple Race (n = 485)	88.7%	88.8%	4.17
	Hispanic or Latino (n = 132)	92.3%	91.6%	4.08
	Asian (n = 79)	89.8%	95.5%	4.34
	Native American (n = 14)	60.9%	65.2%	4.00
	Pacific Islander (n = 10)	90.9%	100.0%	4.00
Disability	Speech or Language Impairment (n = 1772)	92.5%	92.6%	4.28
	Autism (n = 1270)	87.8%	90.0%	4.30
	Developmental Delay (n = 1073)	89.9%	89.7%	4.20
	Specific Learning Disability (n = 1051)	89.4%	90.6%	4.27
	Other Health Impairment (OHI) (n = 534)	90.6%	89.5%	4.35
	Mild Mental Disability (MMD) (n = 383)	90.6%	91.1%	4.32
	Emotional Behavioral Disorder (EBD) (n = 364)	85.7%	87.9%	4.18
	Functional Mental Disability (FMD) (n = 93)	89.1%	94.9%	4.37
Age	Age<5 (n = 774)	80.0%	91.4%	4.15
	Age5-9 (n = 3190)	85.7%	88.7%	4.23
	Age10-13 (n = 2009)	88.0%	88.9%	4.25
	Age14-18 (n = 1484)	91.3%	91.2%	4.32
	Age>=19 (n = 70)	93.0%	93.4%	4.54

More details about how parents were involved in the child's education was further examined by students' race, disability, and age (Table 2). 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, 70% and above of respondents reported that they were very involved in their child's education.

Table 2. How parents feel about being involved in the child's education by race, disability, and age (N=7807).

		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.
Race	White (n = 5508)	75.1%	4.2%	14.1%	10.1%
	Black or African American (n = 567)	74.5%	3.5%	13.6%	11.5%
	Multiple Race (n = 485)	74.4%	2.6%	17.4%	12.8%
	Hispanic or Latino (n = 132)	65.7%	3.5%	20.3%	13.3%
	Asian (n = 79)	68.2%	5.7%	19.3%	11.4%
	Native American (n = 14)	69.6%	0.0%	26.1%	4.3%
	Pacific Islander (n = 10)	54.5%	0.0%	27.3%	18.2%
Disability	Speech or Language Impairment (n = 1772)	77.0%	3.9%	12.9%	9.6%
	Autism (n = 1270)	75.5%	2.6%	16.1%	9.3%
	Developmental Delay (n = 1073)	74.9%	3.4%	14.4%	11.1%
	Specific Learning Disability (n = 1051)	75.8%	4.3%	12.7%	11.6%
	Other Health Impairment (OHI) (n = 534)	77.3%	3.9%	12.0%	9.2%
	Mild Mental Disability (MMD) (n = 383)	72.8%	8.4%	13.1%	9.1%
	Emotional Behavioral Disorder (EBD) (n = 364)	70.9%	6.3%	14.0%	13.2%
	Functional Mental Disability (FMD) (n = 93)	72.4%	5.8%	15.4%	7.7%
Age	Age<5 (n = 774)	71.7%	3.1%	18.9%	12.1%
	Age5-9 (n = 3190)	75.7%	3.7%	13.9%	10.4%
	Age10-13 (n = 2009)	74.7%	4.6%	14.8%	10.0%
	Age14-18 (n = 1484)	75.1%	4.2%	12.3%	10.9%
	Age>=19 (n = 70)	78.6%	4.3%	11.4%	5.7%

Results among race categories showed a similar pattern to that of the previous year. About 75% of White, African American/Black, and Multiple Race students

reported higher percentages of being very involved in their child's education than others, while parents of Pacific Islander students showed the lowest rate (54.5%).

Since 2020, Pacific Islander parents continued to respond at the highest rate regarding not knowing how to be involved, and in 2021 responded at the highest rate in being too busy to be involved. Similarly, Hispanic or Latino families showed a higher rate of "don't know how to be involved with the school about their child's education" (20.3%) and "being too busy to be involved" (13.3%) than most race groups. It was noteworthy that 5.7% of Asian parents reported not needing the school's involvement in their child's education, a gain of about 4 points from 1.3% in 2020.

Over 70.9% of parents among all seven main disability groups believed that they were very involved in the child's education in 2021, and the parents of students with Speech or Language Impairment and Other Health Impairment (OHI) reported the highest rate (77.0% and 77.3%). The results also show that parents of students with Autism had the lowest knowledge of how to be involved in education (16.1%), and parents of students with EBD had the highest rate of "being too busy to be involved" (13.2%).

Similar to 2020, the age group of 19 and above reported the highest rate in being very involved in students' education (78.6%). The parents of students who were younger than 5 showed the highest rate of "don't know how to be involved" (18.9%) and "being too busy to be involved" (12.1%), indicating more efforts on education for parents with younger students.

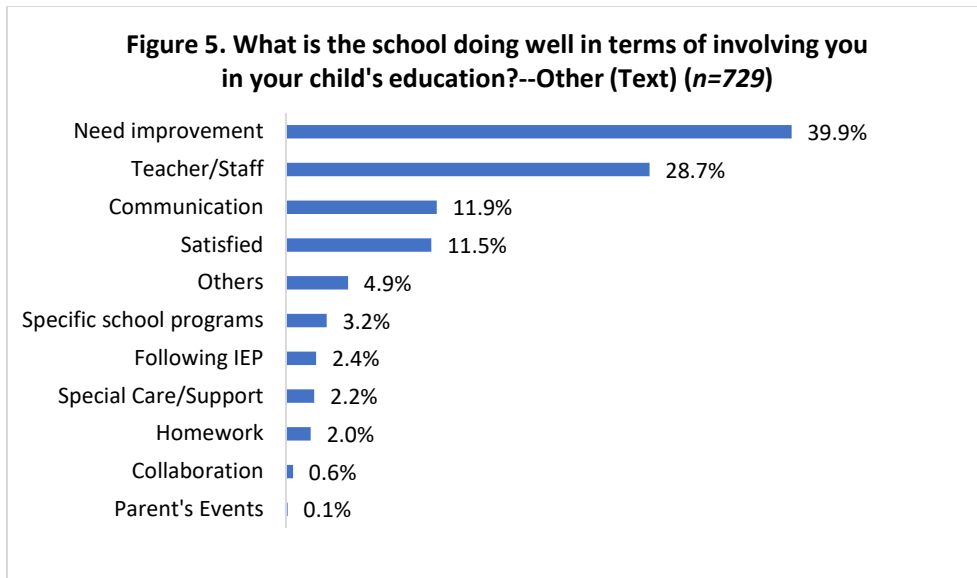
Open Ended Items

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

Two multiple-choice questions with the option for text responses were asked to get detailed information about parents' perceptions of how the school involved 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? To improve the interpretation of the responses to these two questions, the researchers transformed the only-text question into the mixed format. The multiple choices offered categories of responses and the text table allowed additional feedback from parents.

The multiple-choice results of the question "what do you think the school is doing well in terms of involving you in your child's education" was given in Table 3.

Among all the responses, about 64.1% of parents were generally satisfied with the school involvement, and more than a half of parents confirmed that the school did well in communicating information (61.3%), following the IEP (55.2%), and having skilled/caring teachers and staff for students (55.5%). Schools also involved parents in the child’s education by offering homework and related resources to students and parents (24.7%), hosting events for parents (19.8%) and offering specific school programs (24.4%).



Among all the respondents, 729 parents chose the option “other” and 714 of them gave detailed text responses. Among them, about 28.7% of parents appreciated the teachers and staff’s efforts in involving parents, and about 11.9% parents further reported satisfaction with the communication from the school. Other text responses were categorized into “generally satisfied without details”, “other positive aspects”, “specific school programs,” “following IEP,” “special care and support to students and families,” “homework support,” “collaboration with parents”, and “events for parents to participate in child’s education.” Like the results in 2020, about 40% of parents gave negative comments on the school-parent involvement. Most of the parents in this category expressed their concern about the communication from teachers and schools regarding online education support, daily update, and limited school time during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 3. Multiple-choice results of both open-ended items (N=7807).

	How well did the school involve you in education?	What can be done for better involvement?
I am generally satisfied	64.1%	59.2%
Communicating information, including reports, meetings, and visits	61.3%	15.1%
Following the IEP	55.2%	11.1%
Specific school programs	24.4%	12.3%
School events/activities for parents	19.8%	13.1%
Skilled/caring teachers and staff	55.5%	7.3%
Homework support	24.7%	9.0%
Other (Text)	9.3%	10.1%

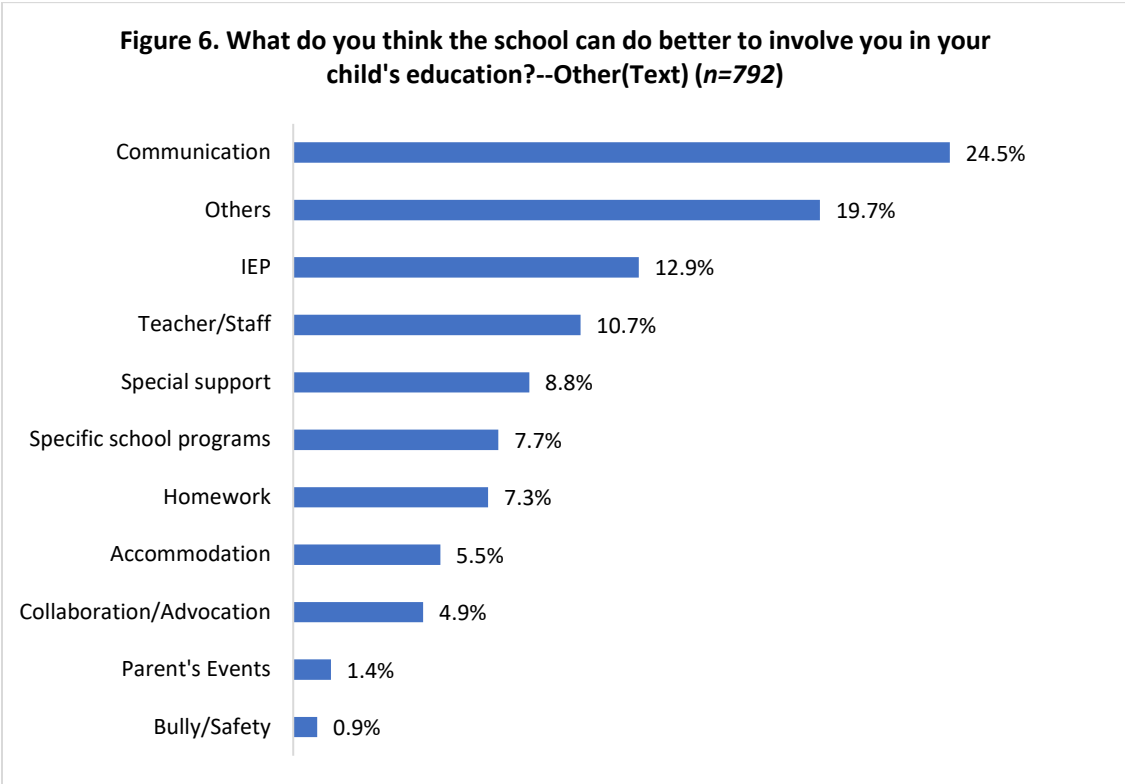
What do you think the school can do better to involve you in your child’s education?

Among all the responses to the multiple-choice question “What do you think the school can do better to involve you in your child’s education?”, 59.2% of parents were satisfied with being involved by the school in their child’s education. The top three concerns about the involvement were the quality of communication between parents and the school (15.1%), events for parents (10.3%), and specific school programs (12.3%). The pattern was like the results in 2020. Parents would also like to see improvement in homework, following the IEP, caring and skilled teachers and staff, and other (text responses).

Among 792 responses of “other”, 783 parents gave detailed comments on how to improve the parental involvement. Among all the responses, the lack of communication remains the major issue (24.5%). Many parents urged timely and respectful communication with teachers, special education teachers and staff. Parents would like to learn more about the daily activities, the progress of the students and the IEP, and more regular reporting. Parents also would like to see improvement in the forms of communication, such as managing emails and making reporting more understandable.

Similarly, many parents complained that the IEP was not followed consistently and would like to be more involved in monitoring the progress and changes of the IEP (12.9%). Some parents also complained that their IEP was not followed due to inexperienced teachers.

The quality of teachers and staff was noted in about 10.7% of parents’ responses. Parents also requested staff with greater knowledge of specific disabilities (e.g., dyslexic, autism) and virtual teaching. Parents also requested more opportunities to communicate, collaborate, and advocate with special education about the specific needs of children. Analysis of the results shows that general education teachers, instead of special education teachers, were noted as having a lack of understanding of specific disabilities, and consequently were not able to educate children with special needs in an appropriate way. Parents also called for more resources for teachers and staff from the district. Other suggestions to improve the school-parent involvement included offering specific school programs based on the specific needs of students, giving an appropriate amount of homework to students with detailed directions, accommodations to meet students’ needs, advocating and collaborating more with parents, hosting events for parents, and preventing bullying.



Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic continued putting extra challenges on both parents and schools. Many parents noted that the COVID-19 situation made many aspects of parent involvement difficult for teachers and schools.

Among the responses to the open-ended question “what do you think the school is *doing well* in terms of involving you in your child’s education,” 73 parents

mentioned COVID-19 or NTI programs. In response to the question “what do you think the school *can do better* in terms of involving you in your child’s education,” 8.9% of parents had concerns about COVID-19 and/or NTI. In addition to those statements with the keyword “COVID” or “NTI”, more responses expressed the challenges of communication and virtual learning during the pandemic.

Several respondents noted that the pandemic worsened existing communication problems. Some parents complained that teachers were not available through email and the frequency of regular meetings were reduced. Some parents were not provided information or explanations regarding turnover of teachers, changes to IEP plans, and in some cases the loss of particular classes within schools.

Many parents felt that virtual learning negatively affected the following of the IEP for several reasons. Online instruction did not offer sufficient time for students’ learning and practice, especially for those who needed extra attention on speech development. Some teachers were reported to lack skills in virtual teaching for reasons such as “turning off their camera during the class for minutes” or “speaking inappropriately.” Therefore, parents requested the school provide professional training for teachers regarding online teaching for students of special needs and to recruit more qualified teachers to deal with the shortage of staff during the pandemic. Another group of parents urged the return to in-person school as soon as possible. The main reasons included: limited online learning time did not benefit academic growth, students were distracted by unrelated information online, parents could not get sufficient supports for online learning, and parents were not experienced in monitoring online learning, to name a few.

Discussion and Conclusions

Results remain generally favorable, with parents overall reporting high levels of encouragement from the school to be involved in their child’s education. This could be interpreted in various ways, however. It could simply be consistent with results from previous years’ findings and may just be a continuation of those efforts. It might also be interpreted that there is an increased need for parental involvement during NTI and may have been more out of necessity than intentional efforts for improvement by districts. It may also be an indicator that parents recognized the difficulty that schools were facing and appreciated the schools’ help during this time.

It is encouraging to see that the level of involvement for different race, disability, and age groups are all above 88%, except for the Native American group with an involvement rate at 60.9%. It may be due to the limited access to academic resources, cultural barriers, or other factors. Among all the disability groups, the parents of autistic students younger than 5 have less knowledge of how to be well

involved with schools. Schools and districts might be advised to offer more educational programs for parents of preschool and primary children.

It is noteworthy that "communication" is referenced frequently in both positive and negative terms. Nearly two-thirds of comments regarding what the school is doing well refer to good communication from their child's school, and about half of the comments about how well the school communicates during distance learning are positive. Still, another 25% refer to communication as an area that could be improved upon. Parents would like to be more involved with their child's education by obtaining information in a timely and consistent manner regarding details about the daily routines, progress and monitoring of the IEPs, behavior, and other social issues. It is worth noting that parents of Hispanic/Latino students gave some of the least favorable responses related to communication, as well as involvement in general. This may be indicative of language barriers. Parents also would like to hear voices of both special and general education teachers to obtain the whole picture of their child's school performance.

The challenges of distance learning for both parents and schools are of importance as well. Distance learning programs often do not offer sufficient time for education and frequently could not meet the special needs of students with disabilities. In addition, parents lack the time and experience in monitoring students during online study at home. Therefore, parents requested an increase in school days per week and urged to return to in-person school. At the same time, schools and districts are encouraged to offer training and resources for teachers and parents.

Appendix A – Sample Letter to Parents (English)

Dear Parent,

The (insert name of district) School District and the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) are seeking feedback from parents regarding how your child’s school is involving you in the special education services provided to your child.

Please complete a brief, online survey to share your experience with your child’s special education services during the current school year (2020-2021). Please go to www.kypso.org, and [complete the thirteen-question survey telling us about your current experiences.](#)

You may also access the survey by scanning the following code into your smartphone or mobile device (if you open your camera and point it at the code it should automatically generate a link that you can access):



If school buildings are open and you would like to visit the school to complete the survey, you are more than welcome to use one of our computers. Only one parent per student should complete this survey. However, if you have more than one child with an Individual Education Program (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. Analysis of the final report will be utilized to improve parent involvement in special education programs.

The deadline for completing this very important survey is **July 31, 2021**.

Thank you for your help.

[Your name and position]

Appendix B – Parent Involvement Survey



English ▾

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 (2020-21).

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

- 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?

- 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)

- 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?

- Yes
- No

5. What do you think the school is doing well in terms of involving you in your child's education? (Check all that apply)

- I am generally satisfied
- Communicating information, including reports, meetings and visits
- Following the IEP
- Specific school programs
- School events / activities for parents
- Skilled / caring teachers and staff
- Homework
- Other (please specify)

6. What do you think the school could do better to involve you in your child's education?
(Check all that apply)

- I am generally satisfied and there is no need of improvement so far.
- Communicating information, including reports, meetings and visits
- Following the IEP
- Specific school programs
- School events / activities for parents
- Skilled / caring teachers and staff
- Homework
- Other (please specify)

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

7. What is your school district?

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

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

9. What is your child's primary disability?

10. What is your child's gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other / Prefer not to answer

11. What was your child's age on June 30, 2020?

12. Has your school helped to prepare your son or daughter for future employment through vocational training (e.g., exploring jobs, paid work experiences)?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

13. How did distance learning impact your involvement with your child's school?

- Very positively
- Somewhat positively
- Neutral / not at all
- Somewhat negatively
- Very negatively

14. How would you rate the school's communication with you during distance learning?

- Very positively

- Somewhat positively
- Neutral
- Somewhat negatively
- Very negatively

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