



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
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The Special Education Statewide Parent Survey

[(School Efforts to Partner with Parents Scale (SEPPS))]

Frequently Asked Questions

FAQ'S

- 1.) How can school districts ensure the accuracy of student addresses and home language to ensure that every parent of a child receiving special education and related services will receive the survey mailing?

Address and home language information submitted by school districts in the mandatory e-RIDE October Enrollment Census is utilized for the Parent Survey mailing. The December 1st Special Education Census is utilized to identify each student with an IEP. The e-RIDE system is open for updates throughout the year, so district data managers must be sure to have it up-to-date each January, prior to the *SEPPS* mailing. RIDE cross references the two reports and provides outreach to District Data Managers and Special Education Directors to seek missing addresses, which helps to assure that the surveys are reaching the correct households.

- 2.) Is it possible to exchange or change a question or the wording on a survey question? (See examples on Calibration Chart 673/544/634)

Because of standardization procedures, altering the wording of a question would invalidate the measure. The instrument's design does allow states to substitute an individual item with another item provided by the developers, provided that the item substituted holds the same weight (calibration). After some careful study of potential substitute items, RI determined (and later reaffirmed) with its parent partners that the items selected by the National Center on Special Education Accountability Measurement (NCSEAM) are, indeed, the most widely universal and applicable to RI families. Further, use of the measure as carefully designed by the national research team ensures that the scale we are using is valid and reliable and will compare consistent data from year to year.

- 3.) Is it OK for a parent to make a copy of someone else's survey and use it if they do not receive one in the mail at home?

No, because only original surveys with original codes can be counted in the analysis. A copy will be identified as a duplicate and will be discounted. To ensure their survey is included in the results, parents should call the help line at Rhode Island Parent Information Network (RIPIN) to request a survey if they do not receive one in the mail during the survey period. (#1-800-464-3399)

4.) Is each district's parent survey score publicly reported?

Each district's score is reported in its annual application for federal funds under IDEA ("Consolidated Resource Plan", or "CRP"), which is available to the public on the RIDE website. At this time, at the federal level, states are required to report state level results only, and not district level data. At this time, survey results are shared in-state with districts, in collaboration with parents as partners, to provide valid, reliable data to school communities to inform local school improvement planning (based on a mailing to all eligible households rather than based on a smaller sample of parents.). The best way to use local *SEPPS* results is for parent and school leaders to analyze the items in light of their own school contexts, draw their own conclusions from the data, and decide the focus for their efforts to enhance partnership. As teams become conversant with the scale, they will be able to begin setting some targets for the participation rate and results they would work toward achieving on subsequent measures. To date, the State Performance Plans required by the U.S. Department of Education that prompt our administration of the *SEPPS* have NOT asked states to report district level performance, nor does the state wish to use this data for external judgement of districts. What IS expected is that district and parent leaders take responsibility for building local awareness of the *SEPPS*, helping schools understand how to use the data it offers for improvement planning, reporting local results from year to year and being aware of trends, and encouraging maximal parent participation in the survey process.

5.) If there are extreme levels of "agreeability" with parent response when answering the questions, how does that affect the overall survey score?

According to standard measurement procedures, surveys that are completed inaccurately (examples-multiple answers for the same item; all responses in the top or bottom extreme) are actually quite rare. However, in these rare cases, including these extremes is considered to invalidate the analysis, and such returns are not included in the analysis. Keep in mind that this is a statewide measure that reports to the U.S. Department of Education the state level results of a statewide representative sample. Although we always hope for returns from every parent of a child receiving special education services, RI's participation rate of approximately 4,000 returns is considered an ample sample size for state level reporting. (By comparison, the national sample size in the development and standardization of the survey was about half of that number.) The important issue is that parents are encouraged to consider each item separately and to answer based on to the best of their experience with each child's school. It is highly unlikely that any survey completed in this way would produce an invalid survey.

6.) Why do some parents/households receive more than one survey at their home? Why is it so important that parents fill out more than one survey?

It is intentional that parents will receive more than one survey when they have more than one child in the home with an IEP. Therefore, parents will receive and be asked to fill out one survey per child with an IEP. The survey mailing list is based upon each child's IEP, not the household itself. It is important to have the parent fill one out per child, because the parent's experience with each child's teachers or school may be quite unique, and data about both is more useful to the district. What gets measured gets counted!

7.) If a parent receives a survey that is not in his or her primary written language, what should s/he do?

The survey is mailed based on the home language submitted by the child's school district in e-RIDE. This information is documented in the child's school record and usually collected on the

Home Language Survey when the student enrolls in a district. To request their survey in an alternate language or to seek assistance in completing the survey, parents should be encouraged to call the help line at RIPIN.

8.) What happens to the comments that are made on the Survey? What does RIDE do with them? RIDE carefully reviews the confidential comments submitted, which are collated and transmitted “as is” from our survey vendor to RIDE. Because RI is beginning to share local results now with school communities, we are exploring ways to create summaries to inform districts of trends emerging in these parent comments, to add further richness of information to help with making improvement plans at the local level. In designing this next step, the priority is to continue to ensure confidentiality. We will keep you updated regarding this development.

9.) What is the range of the *SEPPS* calibration scale and where does the score of 600 fall in the NCSEAM Item bank?

This framework was based on an “agreeability” scale, with corresponding calibrations for each survey item. Some items carry “more weight” than others regarding how much effort a school is making to partner with parents. When the standard was set for the scale, the national standard-setting group (researchers and key stakeholders) reached agreement regarding the school traits that indicate sufficient effort at partnering with parents. It was easy for all to agree on the very basic expectations for school efforts. Those expectations or “indicators” that were easy to agree with created items considered to have lower calibrations. There are other indicators on the scale that fewer people agreed must be present to consider a school’s efforts sufficient- these items are counted at a higher calibration, because they reflect more highly developed school efforts to partner with parents—some items are even considered beyond the minimum requirements, or minimum “standard”. For most schools, it is likelier that parents will agree with items of lower calibration, because these items describe more basic school efforts likely to be found in many schools. Items at higher calibrations are less likely to show a response of “agree”, because they describe very highly developed partnership effort not evident at every school.

In scoring, each respondent’s survey answers are compiled into a single score, and scores for all surveys are added together and analyzed at the district and state level. The initial calibration levels for the *SEPPS* development ranged from 200-800. The development team agreed that a score of 600 would meet minimum expectations for school partnership. This would mean that a parent had agreed with enough descriptors of their child’s school to confirm that the school’s partnership efforts met the basic agreed-upon expectations. A score of 600 corresponds to the survey item, “The school explains what options parents have if they disagree with a decision of the school.” A survey score of 600 means that the parent has a 95% likelihood of responding “agree,” “strongly agree,” or “very strongly agree” to that statement and all other items up to that calibration level. Rhode Island has adopted the nationally set standard of 600 as its indication that a school is making acceptable efforts to partner with parents of students with disabilities as one means of improving services.

10.) Do other states use the NCSEAM measurement tool?

Survey Instrument	# of States	% of States
NCSEAM (<i>SEPPS</i>)	37	63%
Adapted NCSEAM	10	17%
State Developed	10	17%
Combination	2	3%

In 2008, thirty seven states implemented a “sampling method” to survey just a sample of parents of students with IEP’s. Like RI, nineteen implemented a statewide “census method” to survey **all** parents of students with IEPs. Just three used a combination of survey methods. Thirty-seven states (63%) used some version of the preschool and/or school-age special education parent surveys developed by the National Center on Special Education Accountability and Monitoring (NCSEAM). (The NCSEAM survey is now referred to as the *SEPPS*.) Ten States (17%) adapted questions from the NCSEAM or Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) Center parent surveys to develop their own Indicator 8 surveys. Ten States (17%) utilized their own tool, one that had been developed previously for monitoring or other purposes, or a survey created specifically to respond to this APR indicator. Two States (3%) used a combination of surveys (different survey instruments for preschool and school-age parents).

Sampling Method	# of States	% of States
Sampling method	37	63%
Census-based survey	19	32%
Combination	3	5%

In 2008, Thirty-seven states (63%) implemented some type of sampling plan. Generally this involved developing rotating cohorts so that over a two to six year period, all districts would eventually be surveyed. These cycles frequently correspond to existing monitoring plans used by states to evaluate districts. Most often parents in participating districts would be invited to complete the survey, although sampling was used in larger districts in some states. OSEP requires districts with over 50,000 students to be surveyed annually. Approximately one third of states (19) utilized the census method and made the survey available to all parents of children ages 3–21 receiving special education services. Three States (5%) used a combination of census and sampling. Typically in these cases the preschool survey was conducted through a census while a sampling plan was developed for parents of school-age students.

11.) How does **RI** parent participation in the SEPPS compare to other states?

The average response rate across all States was 22.93%. Only ten states reported response rates of 30% or higher. Eight states did not report enough information to determine a response rate for their parent involvement surveys.

Response Rate	# of States	% of States
0–9%	6	9%
10–19%	24	36%
20–29%	18	27%
30–39%	4	6%
40–49%	2	3%
50–59%	0	0%
60–69%	2	3%
70–79%	0	0%
80–89%	1	1%
90–100%	1	1%
Set N	1	1%
Unknown	8	12%

12.) How does the SEPPS survey relate to the School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT) Survey that has been utilized by the state of RI in the past?

The SALT Survey is not currently being administered in Rhode Island schools. However, these two instruments have both similarities and differences. Both tools are designed to be very useful in providing good, objective information to school communities who want their improvement planning to be based on good data. The best way to use the SEPPS data is for school teams to consider and analyze the data, draw conclusions based on their school and district context, and decide where best to focus improvement efforts. The purpose of the tool is not intended to be used for competitive rating or ranking among districts.

The *SEPPS* is a measurement tool that yields a valid, reliable standardized “score” indicating how a school is performing against that standard score. The SEPPS is similar to standardized reading or math tests in that they, too, measure how a student is performing against a given standard. In these types of measures, steps can be taken to improve the performance and reach a better score compared to the standard. In comparison, the SALT Survey was a collection of information about school practices and experiences from multiple perspectives—students, parents, school staff. The survey that each person completed contained items known to reflect practices of high performing schools, based on researched characteristics of high performing schools. The SALT Survey did not yield a standardized score; it yielded charts and graphs showing how certain (effective) practices were in place in a school and compared the perspectives of students, parents, and staff regarding the practices in place. The SALT Survey also showed some comparison between what staff **believed** to be good practice, and what they actually **implemented** regarding these practices.

13.) What is the Parent Training and Information Center (PTIC) located at the Rhode Island Parent Information Network (RIPIN) and what purpose does it serve?

Rhode Island Parent Information Network (RIPIN) has been selected by the US Department of Education as the Parent Training and Information Center (PTIC) in Rhode Island under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The PTIC is funded by the US Department of Education. The PTIC provides education, workshops, trainings, resources and supports to families raising children with disabilities and the professionals working with them in the area of education the PTIC supports families, individuals, districts and schools with technical assistance on various topics including parent leadership.

In concert, RIPIN is also identified by the US Department of Education as the designated Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC) in Rhode Island. A PIRC is designated and funded in each state with Title I funding to improve children’s school success by developing and strengthening partnerships among parents, teachers, principals, administrators and other school personnel. The PIRC provides technical assistance, workshops and resources to families and schools to support meaningful parent involvement and works with identified Title I schools to help them meet their parental involvement requirements. RI PIRC also supports the Parents as Teachers program and the HIPPO program, helping parents to be their child’s first and best teacher. RIPIN’s role is to partner with the SEA in order to improve and promote family engagement for all families on all levels.

14.) What is the cost of the SEPPS survey distribution in RI?

In RI, the cost of administering the *SEPPS* is federally funded with IDEA Part B funds. These funds support the formatting, production, mailing, analysis, and reporting regarding the survey; cost of marketing activities designed collaboratively with parent and school partners, such as a

Providence Journal advertisement, Rhode Island public transport posters, public service announcements on English and Spanish radio stations, production and translation of marketing notices; development of data systems; support of a parent and school consultant team to provide technical assistance to school communities; and related staffing.

In addition, school districts add further support based on local, state, and federal sources to help with marketing the survey and encouraging parent participation, such as distributing notices, supporting LAC survey meetings, and deploying telephone communication systems.

For additional information: <http://www.accountabilitydata.org/parent-family-involvement.htm>