1. Executive Summary

Background and Purpose of Study

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 requires that each state 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 most recent information found on the Texas Education Agency website (www.tea.state.tx.us) shows the Texas SPP was most recently updated February, 2014.

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.¹ This report covers the tenth administration of the survey (spring 2015), with previous surveys conducted in fall 2006, spring 2007, spring 2008, spring 2009, spring 2010, spring 2011, spring 2012, spring 2013, and spring 2014.

There are over 1,200 school districts in Texas ranging in size from 20 to over 200,000 students, and over 8,400 campuses within Texas with some districts having over 100 separate campuses.

Research Goals

Each year, one-sixth of the Texas school districts are selected to participate in the study, ensuring each district of 50,000 students or less is included once in the six year cycle. Districts with 50,000 or greater students are included in the study each year. The survey is offered in English and Spanish, and as a paper or web/online survey, in order to encourage as many parents as possible to complete the survey. Eligible participants are selected based on specific demographic characteristics of their child, such as ethnicity, eligible disability category, and grade level. The research is focused on: communication between schools, teachers and parents; school climate; teacher’s involvement with parents of their students; and parent’s involvement with their child’s education.

Specific Objectives

The survey is intended to produce anonymous and unbiased data that will inform TEA of the successful areas of the special education programs, and the areas where improvements are necessary. Each question falls into one of the following categories:

- Environment
- Communication
- ARD/IEP Participation
- Results

Each of the eight closed-ended survey questions are abstract questions with sub-dimensions designed to inspire parents to respond candidly and with little burden.

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 that had been distributed by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and Regional Education Service Center 9 (Region 9) in 2003. A separate survey development committee was created to develop the SPP survey in fall 2008. The survey’s questions focus on the following issues: parent satisfaction, communication between parents and school, parents’ understanding of information, services and information provided, school climate, the teacher’s role, and parent participation in training. English and Spanish versions were developed. There were several modifications to the questions for 2015. These will be presented in the Survey Development and Production Section.

Sampling. In 2015, 18,550 parents were selected to be included in the survey from 202 districts across the state. One-sixth of all Texas districts are sampled each year, with every district included at some point during a six-year cycle. However, each district with at least 50,000 students is included each year. Once districts and campuses were randomly selected for 2015, which is the second year in the six-year cycle, parents were randomly selected based on demographic characteristics of their child including ethnicity, grade level, and eligibility category (i.e., learning disability, speech disability, autism, etc.).

Survey Distribution. Beginning in April 2015, each parent or guardian received an envelope with the selected child’s name, a letter of instruction, the survey, and a return (postage-paid) envelope. Region 9 supplied NuStats with postcards that provided information on free, statewide resources for parents of children receiving special education services. These postcards were included in as many of the student packets as possible. Due to the limited number of postcards received, NuStats included them in packets for all districts with the exception of:

Region 1
- Brownsville

Region 2
- Freer

Region 3
- Bay City
- Halletsville

Region 4
- Aldine
- C O R E Academy
- Beatrice Mayes
- Bay Area Charter Inc
- Fort Bend
- Hardin
Region 5
- Colmesneil
- Hudson

Region 6
- Caldwell
- Buffalo
- Bremond
- Big Sandy

Region 7
- Frankston
- Ranch Academy

Region 10
- Frisco
- Garland

A web component was provided for parents to complete the survey via web, if they chose. For questions, phone numbers were provided for Region 9, TEA, and NuStats. Technical support was provided in both English and Spanish. Districts were given leeway in their method of distributing the surveys to the parents; however, parents were asked to return the surveys by June 5, 2015. This deadline was extended until June 19, 2015. To reduce the burden on school staff members, every participating campus received a maximum of 20 surveys.

**Principal Survey**

In addition to the parent survey, 2,498 surveys were mailed to principals of campuses included in the sample. These surveys were shipped to each campus with the parent survey packets, and principals were asked to return the survey by June 5, 2015. A web component was also offered to the principals to enable them to complete survey online. The principal's survey questions focused on items that paralleled the parent survey. This deadline was also extended until June 19, 2015. There were no changes made to the principal survey for 2015.

**Findings**

**Parent Survey Overall Findings – Quantitative**

A total of 3,298 completed parent surveys were returned with 2,918 returned via mail, and 380 through web (a return rate of 18 percent). Of these, 2,648 English and 650 Spanish-language surveys were completed in time to be included in the quantitative analyses. Roughly 1,975 parents also provided responses to the open-ended questions.

A total of 23 questions from the parent survey were divided into four topic-specific categories and examined. Grouping the three types of responses (Always-Never, Yes-No, and Agree-Disagree), Table 1 presents a summary of responses within these categories. For each category, responses were overall positive. The percentages of responses in the least positive category were higher this year in two categories, and lower in the other two. School Environment Issues once again fell under 5 percent (decreasing slightly by .2 percent), and Communication Issues decreasing by .6 percentage points. The response patterns for this year’s survey were very similar to findings from the previous years. This consistency argues for both the reliability and validity of findings.
Table 1: Summary by Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Environment Issues</td>
<td>78.7%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Issues</td>
<td>74.2%</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARD/IEP Participation</td>
<td>87.0%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results/Progress</td>
<td>76.6%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note that percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Parent Survey Overall Findings – Qualitative

Although the participants generally responded positively to questions regarding their interactions with the school (as seen in the summary ratings in Table 1), there were items for which the ratings were less positive (parental actions are not included for this consideration). Below are selected areas for which at least 10 percent of the ratings fell into the Negative category, along with the survey category in which it is found:

'School personnel provide information on parent organizations, community agencies, or trainings related to the needs of my child'; Communication Category. Overall, 11.3 percent of parents felt that school personnel do not provide information on communication, agencies or trainings related to their child's needs.

'The school provides me information on my child's disability'; Communication Category. (This issue was also identified in spring 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014.) Of note, the highest negative rating in the entire survey was received from parents of students with Other Health Impairments, with a negative rating of 33.2% (see Table 21).

'The school provides information on agencies that can assist my child in planning for life after high school'; ARD/IEP Participation Category. (This issue was also identified in spring 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014.) Of note, this question was to have been answered by parents of students age 14 and up. The negative response rate for parents of high school students was 18.3 percent.

'The school includes my child in the ARD meeting'; ARD/IEP Participation Category. This year was the first year that this question was presented in the survey. This question was specified to be answered by parents of children age 14 and up. Parents that completed a Spanish-language survey showed a negative response rate of 10.4 percent.

Two of these items center on Communication issues, specifically on the school's lack of provision of information to parents on their child's disability and resources for outside agencies and support. It has been noted in previous years that the item regarding information about a child's disability likely reflects providing understandable and useful information.

Generally within each of the categories in Table 1, findings from respondents in the spring 2015 survey were similar to the spring 2014 survey. This year, Communication Issues was the lowest-rated area, followed closely by ARD/IEP Participation issues. These low ratings were driven...
primarily by negative responses to the ‘school provides me information on my child’s disability’ question noted above.

Overall, parent open-ended responses parallel the responses received in the structured survey. Parents who responded to the survey were overall satisfied with the services received by their child’s school. The following is a list of the overall findings from parent open-ended responses.

- Overall satisfaction – The majority of respondents expressed being satisfied with the special education services provided by schools.
- More information and training – Parents noted that they need help understanding their child’s disability. They asked for the school to provide more specific and relevant information.
- Communication improvements – While overall satisfied, parents noted concern 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 contribute to the academic progress of their children.

**Principal Survey Overall Findings – Quantitative**

Of the 2,498 principal surveys that were distributed, 687 completed surveys were returned via mail, and 229 through web, representing a 37 percent return rate. Overall, results from 2015 were similar to previous years’ results, however, in one specific area, there was a significant reduction: School has a written campus-level parent involvement plan (26 percent decrease).

**Principal Survey Overall Findings - Qualitative**

Overall, the qualitative findings of the principal survey for 2015 are very similar to those of previous years. The most important issues identified by principals center mainly on communication, be it via telephone, email, written notes or face-to-face meetings. The majority of principals reported their campuses have made efforts to offer parent conference meeting times in the evening, as well as offering assistance to aid parents in the ability to attend school functions. Examples of this are babysitting services and transportation services. As in previous years, the majority of principals report that parents of students receiving special education services attendance of PTO/PTA and other parent organizations as issues of importance.