

SEEDS Project

Analysis of Parent Input Verification Reviews 2001-2002

Overview

The SEEDS Project has assisted the Department of Education (CDE), Special Education Division (SED), with Verification Reviews since 1999. The Verification Review is one tool in the Focused Monitoring and Technical Assistance (FMTA) process of assessing school districts' compliance with special education law. In 2000-2001, CDE introduced the parent/guardian input meeting as a mechanism for bringing forward the perspectives and experiences of parents and guardians as part of the verification review. The meetings are required under the Supplemental Budget Report to the legislature.

This year, SEEDS participated in eighteen Verification Reviews that included the following activities: Pre-Review meeting, Parent/ Guardian Input Meeting, Review of Student Records, and Post- Review meeting. SEEDS piloted telephone interviews with parents in fourteen of the eighteen districts participating in the Verification Reviews. FMTA consultants requested contact of 10-20 families per district.

Parent Moderators

SEEDS sought parents of children with disabilities from statewide parent networks and centers to serve as moderators for the Parent/Guardian input meetings. The parent moderators received training and individual coaching by SEEDS staff. The parent moderator's protocol for the meeting contained questions developed from the CDE Verification Review Parent/ Guardian Input Meeting Recording Sheet, the CDE CCR Self-Review Focus Group Data Collection Sheet, the CDE Focus Group Protocol, and the CDE Verification Review Parent Interview Protocol.

Methods of Collecting Parent Input

Parents' responses were collected from two sources: evaluation forms from the parent/guardian input meetings and notes from parent telephone interviews. This year, based on parent feedback, the evaluation form was revised to offer parents an opportunity to express their opinions of special education in writing. SEEDS collected these evaluations and submitted the information to CDE (CDE also collected written input from parents). 151 evaluations were collected from 476 participants (32%).

The telephone interviews consisted of 10-15 questions provided by CDE consultants which covered areas such as parent satisfaction, IEP implementation, participation in general education, and transition. The interviewer recorded parents' responses. 80 parents were interviewed from a total of 14 school districts.

It should be noted that only a small percentage of parents from each district participated in these parent input activities. All parents of students in special education were invited to the input meeting. The attendance was 6% or less of these potential participants, with the exception of two districts which had 13% and 14% attendance. Parents who attended the meeting often reported that they did not receive the invitation in a timely manner. Parents have also reported that the invitation was sent home with their students, and this was not always a reliable means of receiving information.

Analysis of Parent Input

The comments from each of these data sources were tabulated and organized into two levels. The first level grouped similar comments into specific **topics** such as caseload size and speech therapy. The second level grouped related topics into more general **themes** such as communication and services. The ten most frequently expressed topics and themes were then calculated.

Topics Reported by Parents

The ten most frequently expressed topics are described below. The frequency of each topic appears in parenthesis. See Figure 1 for a summary of the top ten topics.

1. **Communication with Parents** (22). This included daily class reporting as well as regular reports of child progress.
2. **Transition** (21). This reflects concern with secondary transition planning and services.
3. **Caseload Size** (19). Parents were concerned that their service providers served too many students and did not have time to serve students well.
4. **Placement Options** (17). Some parents feared that special day classes would close, while others reported a lack of inclusive settings.
5. **Speech therapy** (14). Parents reported a lack of speech therapy services.
6. **Materials /Training /Discussion of Parent Rights** (12). Parents' Rights were not discussed at the IEP, nor were training and materials provided to them.
 - 7a. **Understanding of Special Education Process** (11). Parents reported that they did not understand how the special education system works.
 - 7b. **IEP Implementation** (11). Parents reported that services were not delivered in accordance with the IEP.
8. **Teacher Training** (10). Parents requested more training for special education and general education teachers.
 - 9a. **Resource Access** (8). Parents were interested in resources to help their children, both within and outside of school.
 - 9b. **Testing** (8). Students were not invited to participate in STAR testing or did not have accommodations made available to them. Parents were concerned about their children's ability to pass the California High School Exit Exam.
10. **Educational Staff Doesn't Listen** (7). Parents didn't feel their information and concerns were heard.

Themes

The ten most frequently occurring themes are described below. The frequency of each theme appears in parenthesis. See Figures 2 and 3 for a summary of the top ten themes.

1. **Parents Rights/ Parents as Partners** (46). This theme included parents' concerns about lack of discussion, training, and material on Parents' Rights as well as feelings of "not being listened to," and not feeling like a partner on the educational team.
2. **Staffing Concerns** (36): This theme included concerns that caseloads and class sizes were too large, as well as the need for additional training for teachers and instructional assistants. Some parents stated that their children's teachers were not interested in learning new strategies or methods.
3. **Services** (34). The largest segment of this theme was speech therapy, which was insufficient. Parents reported concerns with assistive technology, transportation, and physical therapy. Parents also reported a lack of services, a lack of discussion about services at the IEP meeting, fragmented services, and poor quality of services.
4. **Communication** (30). Some parents simply stated "communication" while other parents specifically described lack of communication with teachers, lack of reporting of child progress and daily activities, ignoring requests for strategies for home, and not receiving information on resources, services, and the special education system. Lack of information in the parents' native language was also included in this theme.
5. **General Education/Special Education Communication** (23). Parents were concerned that general education teachers were not informed about the child's disability, IEP contents, or need for specialized instruction and modifications. They commented that general and special education teachers don't communicate with each other. Parents were concerned about their children's safety in general education. They discussed disability awareness.
6. **Transition** (21). Parents reported lack of transition plans and services particularly at the secondary level.
7. **IEP Process** (18). This theme included lack of required IEP team members at meetings (e.g., general education teachers, administrators), slow timelines, and lack of evaluations.
8. **Educational Placement Options** (17). Parents reported fear that their special day classes would close, while others reported a lack of inclusive placement options.
9. **Outcomes** (14). One parent wondered if her son was making progress. Parents were interested in greater access to homework, grade level curricula, and to the general curriculum.
10. **IEP Implementation** (12). Parents expressed concern with services that were not delivered.

Summary

All parents from each school district undergoing a Verification Review during the 2001 - 2002 school year were invited to share their opinions about their special education programs. A small number of parents in each school district attended parent/guardian input meetings and/or participated

in telephone interviews. Of the parents in attendance, 32% completed written evaluation forms. 80 families participated in telephone interviews.

The most frequently reported topic by parents was Communication with Parents. The most frequently reported theme was Parents' Rights/Parents as Partners. Parents stated that they were not listened to, that they did not feel like a partner on the educational team, and that they had difficulty obtaining information about their children's progress, and that they did not receive training or explanation of their Parents' Rights. Four of the top ten specific topics fell into this Parents' Rights theme: materials and training on Parents' Rights, Understanding and discussion of Parents' Rights, Access to Resources, and The Educational Team Doesn't Listen.

Concerns about caseload size (a topic) and staffing concerns (a theme) were expressed frequently. Other staffing concerns included increased training for teachers and instructional assistants.

The topics of Transition, Placement Options, and IEP Implementation appear as both top ten topics and general themes. Although these items are general enough to serve as themes, many parents spoke of them specifically. Therefore, they appear in both groups of data. Parents were concerned with the lack of secondary transition planning and services. Parents raised questions about the closing of special day classes, and corresponding loss of services. They were concerned with the lack of inclusive placement options. Parents were concerned that services were not delivered as written on the IEP. See Figure 4 for a visual breakdown of topics and themes.

Throughout the 2001-2002 Verification Reviews, many parents who expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to participate in parent/guardian input meetings and interviews. Many shared their hope that the parent voice would continue to be included in future Verification Reviews.

Figure 1

Verification Review 2001-2002

Topics Most Frequently Reported By Parents

Rank	No. of Responses	Topic	Theme
1	22	Communication With Parent	Communication
2	21	Transition	Transition
3	19	Caseloads Size	Staffing Concerns
4	17	Placement Options	Educational Placement
5	14	Speech Therapy	Services
6	12	Materials/Training/Discussion	Parent Rights
7a	11	Understanding of Special Education Process	Parent Rights
7b	11	IEP Implementation	IEP Implementation
8	10	Teacher Training	Staffing Concerns
9a	8	Resource Access	Parent Rights
9b	8	Testing	Testing
10	7	Educational Staff Don't Listen	Parent Rights

Figure 2

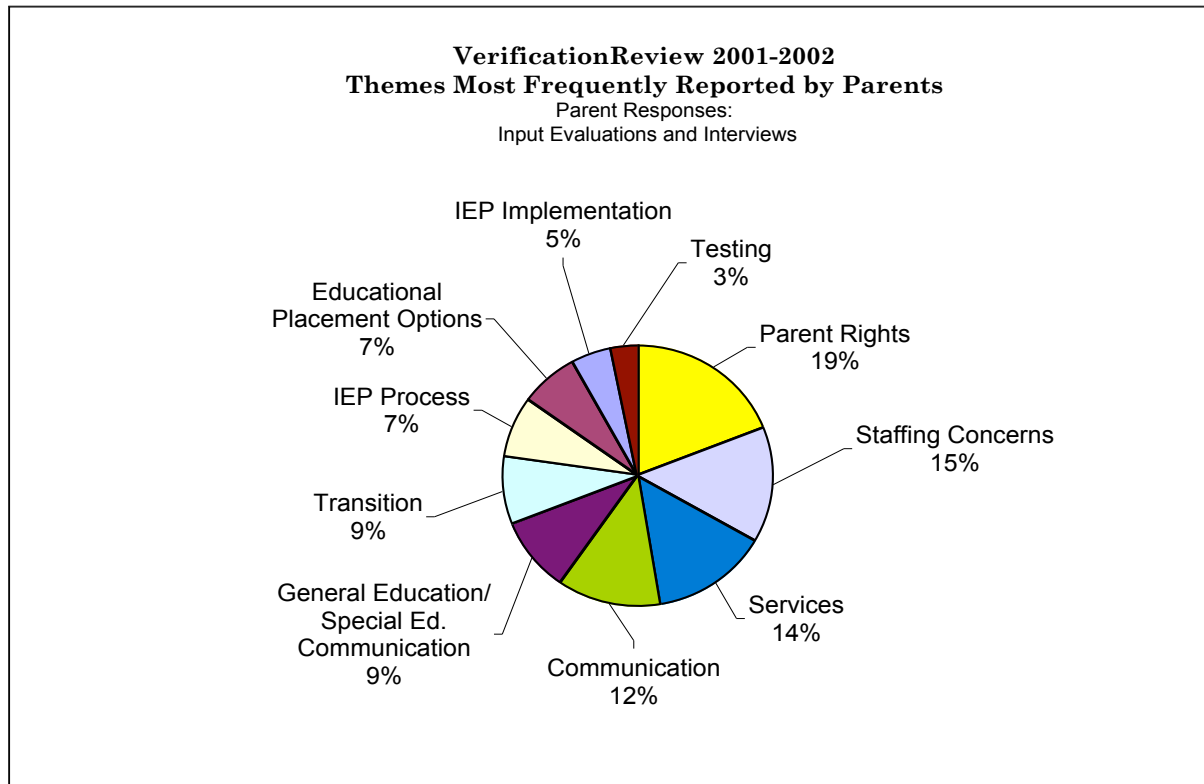


Figure 3

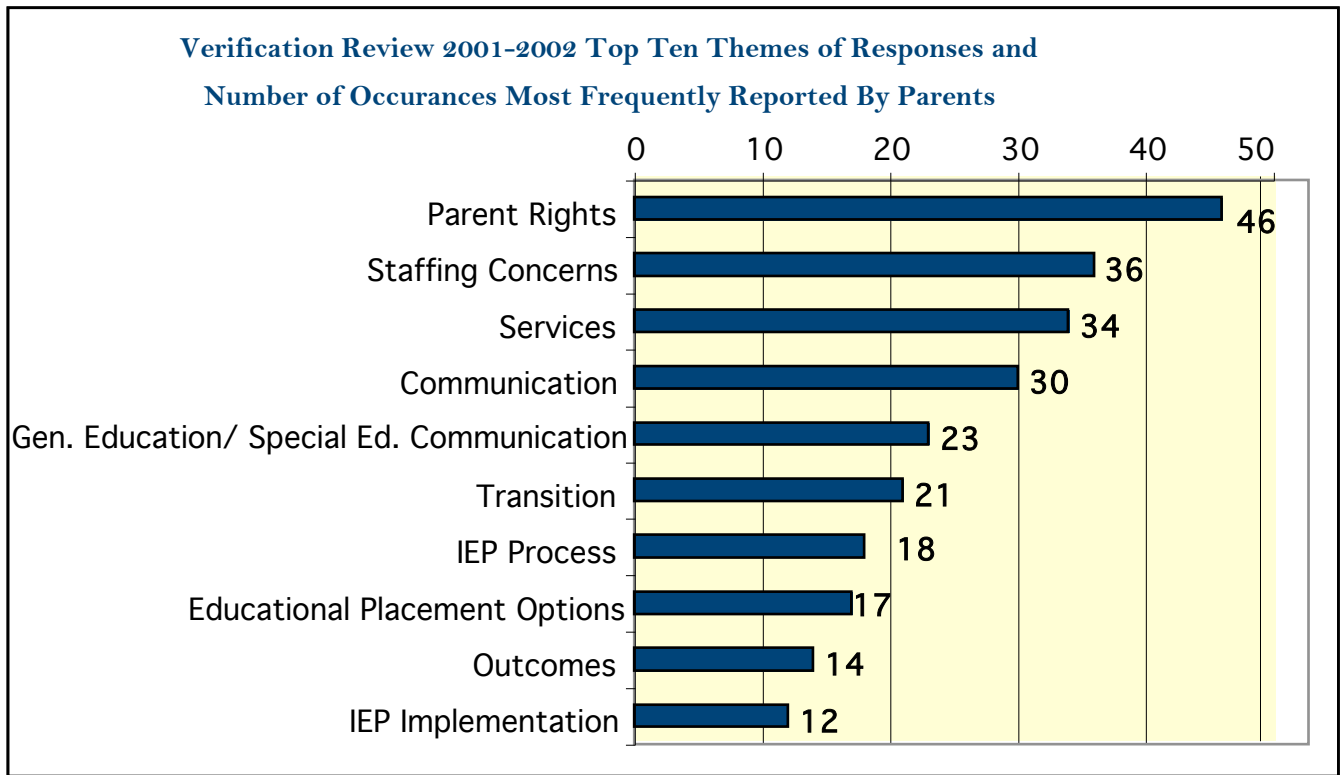


Figure 4

Verification Review 2001-2002

Themes & Topics Most Frequently Reported by Parents

Themes	Topic	Number of Responses	Top Ten Topic Rank #
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1 Parent Rights	Total Responses	46	
	Materials/Training/Discussed	12	6
	Understanding	11	7a
	Resource Access	8	9a
	Don't Listen	7	10
	Need to Advocate	5	
	Partnership	3	

2 Staffing Concerns	Total Responses	36	
	Caseloads size	19	3
	Training- Teacher	10	8
	Training- Aide	6	
3 Services	Drug Testing	1	
	Total Responses	34	

	Speech	14	5
	Extended Year	4	
	Transportation	4	
	Counseling	3	
	Quality	3	
	Not Discussed	2	
	Assistive	1	
	Lack of Services	1	
	PT	1	
	Related service- general	1	
4	Communication	Total Responses	30
	With Parent	22	1
	Parent -native lang	4	
	General	3	
	Student - native lang	1	
5	General Ed./ Special Ed. Communication	Total Responses	23
	Communication	6	
	Resistance	4	
	Disability Awareness	3	
	Exclusion from general ed	3	
	Safety	3	
	Gen. Ed teacher aware of IEP	2	
	Admin Awareness	1	
	No acknowledgment of disability	1	
6	Transition	Total Responses	21
	Transition	21	2
7	IEP Process	Total Responses	18
	Evaluations	5	
	Process issues	5	
	Team Attending meeting	4	
	Full Team	2	
	Alternative Resolution	1	
	Eligibility	1	
8	Educational Placement Options	Total Responses	17
	Placement options	17	4
9	Outcomes	Total Responses	14
	Grade level curriculum	5	
	Achieve	3	

Help in mainstream classes	3
Homework	3

10	IEP Implementation	Total Responses	12	
		IEP Implementation	11	7b
		Fragmented services	1	

11	Testing	Total Responses	8	
		Testing	8	9b