

OVERVIEW

On December 1, 2022, the Blueprint Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) adopted its Initial Blueprint Comprehensive Implementation Plan. The Implementation Plan outlines recommendations for the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to convene a Blueprint Special Education Workgroup to discuss and make recommendations on instruction and services for students with disabilities. MSDE is deeply invested in the success of students with disabilities and ensuring that all Blueprint-related programming occurs based on the best-in-class evidence-based research and strategies. Doing so is essential for the growth of our students with disabilities, particularly given the disproportionality of identification and service requirements.

To prepare for the session on Authentic Family–School Partnership, the Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services collaborated with the Parents’ Place of Maryland (PPMD) to conduct a four-question online survey. This survey, available in both English and Spanish, gathered insights from families across the state about their experiences with family–school partnerships. To meet the deadline for distributing pre-reading materials, the survey was open for one week.

Results

PPMD collected the following information as part of survey;

- Name; County; Age of Youth; Disability; Race; and Ethnicity
- Four questions were asked –
 - Do the families you support feel they are equal members of their children's/students' teams? (For example, do they feel heard and valued?)
 - What is working well? Where is it working well? Can you share any specific examples of successful partnerships?
 - What are the biggest barriers to authentic partnerships between families and school teams?
 - What would you suggest to strengthen partnerships for school teams and families?

Online Survey Results –

- Responses received from all counties except Caroline, Garrett, and Worcester
- 6- Asian Or Asian American; 17 Multiracial; 47 Black or African American; 82 White Or Caucasian; 18 Prefer not to answer
- 21 Hispanic or Latino; 131 Non-Hispanic or Latino; 18 Prefer Not to Answer
- 3 Birth to 2; 31 3 to 5; 82 6 to 11; 42 12 to 14; 33 15 to 17; 16 18 to 21; 4 22+; 1 N/A
- 15 504 Plan; 150 IEP, 5 IFSP

Do you feel like an equal member of your child/student's team?

	NO	YES
Number of surveyors	76	94

If you selected yes, tell us more about how you feel like an equal member of your child/student's team. What is working well?

Common Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents expressed their concerns, felt heard, and they were considered • Parents experienced positive and consistent communication between staff and parents • Parents expressed their opinions with regards to their child's care and felt valued <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Spanish Responses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel very good because any doubt or question I have; the staff communicate with me. • In his first school, communication with the teachers and other people was very good. • My son's IEP team has learned to listen to me and value me because I have shown them that no one knows my son better than me.

If you selected No, tell us why you do not feel like an equal member of your child/student's team. What could improve?

Common Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents feel as if they did not receive enough updates on their child's progress • Parents felt not enough respect being shown for their insight on their child's needs • Parents expressed needing more training to fully understand IEPs • Parents had negative experiences with school staff (staff being dismissive of parents concerns and responding condescendingly to their questions and input) • Parents experienced not enough communication between themselves and staff <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Spanish Responses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In my last IEP meeting (via zoom) they disconnected without asking me or giving my opinion. It was a meeting for them in which I was only the listener. • IEP not being followed

- I feel that the big **barrier is the language**, a lot of time is wasted translating and that meetings are a disaster, so I am learning English so I don't have any more barriers and so I can be my son's voice.
- When I ask for something to be sent to me, whether it is a translated document, they do not do it
- My answer is yes and no. They listen to me and always ask my opinion. But when it's time to take action, I don't feel that they really support my thinking and that **in the end they do what they want.**

What would you suggest would strengthen partnerships for school teams and families?

Common Responses

- Clear **communication and transparency** between the parents and school teams
- Provide **more school resources** to parents
- The continued **inclusion of parents with planning and decision making** with regards to their child care.
- Provided **conferences** between parents and teachers prior to the first day of school to better prepare all parties.
- **Help parents better understand IEPs** (what they can and cannot do)
- Work to **adhere to the accommodations** provided to their children
- Allow **better training for teachers** so that they are better equipped to understand and assist parent and their children.

Spanish Responses

- When explaining something, they should be **more specific and clear.**
- It is important that schools **have a Hispanic liaison** to support families who do not speak English but who are interested in being present in the academic life of our children.
- Make **more informal participations**, events together, can the team visit where a student lives? Knowing their experience helps to make a connection.
- May we be more sociable and **communicate in a friendly way.**
- May our **suggestions be taken into account.**
- The **process should be clearer.**