

Parents' Perceptions of the P.J. Settlement Agreement

Prepared by:

**Joan Nicoll-Senft, Ph.D.
Central Connecticut State University**

April 2004

Acknowledgements

This project is the result of collaborations between Central Connecticut State University, the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center and the Connecticut State Department of Education. Leigh Moulis, a graduate student at Central Connecticut State University, was responsible for assistance with data collection and analysis.

This parent survey was conducted to assess parents' reactions to the P.J. Settlement, which resulted from a class action lawsuit involving the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in their neighborhood schools (P.J., ET AL v. State of Connecticut, Board of Education, ET AL). Over 3,000 (3,220) surveys were mailed to families affected by the P.J. Settlement Agreement (families who have one or more children identified as having an intellectual disability) via a mailing by the Connecticut State Department of Education in November of 2003. Every attempt was made to include all families affected by the P.J. Settlement; however contact information was unavailable for some families. Participants were allotted a three-week time frame to complete and return the surveys. Completed surveys continued to be received through January 2004. Of the mailed surveys, 199 surveys were returned due to a wrong mailing address. A total of 679 completed surveys were returned. This represents a response rate of approximately 21%.

Of specific interest to this parent survey is whether the Settlement Agreement has made an impact on families regarding the five goals of the P.J. Settlement Agreement:

- an increase in the percent of students with intellectual disability who are placed in regular education classes;
- a reduction in the disparate identification of students with intellectual disability by LEA, by racial group, by ethnic group, or by gender group;
- an increase in the mean and median percent of the school day that students with intellectual disability spend with nondisabled students;
- an increase in the percent of students with intellectual disability who attend the school they would attend if not disabled; and
- an increase in the percent of students with intellectual disability who participate in school-sponsored extracurricular activities with nondisabled students.

Highlights from the 2003 P.J. Parent Survey Data:

The following highlights are based on parent responses to the 2003 P.J. Settlement Parent Survey. Chi-Square was the statistical method used to determine significant findings. Results are preliminary and descriptive only of the P.J. Parent Survey respondents. Responses to survey items were not compared by race/ethnicity for this report due to a concern regarding the lack of representativeness of this data to the population. Appendix A provides a summary of responses from the P.J. Parent Survey.

- Almost three-quarters of families (n=503; 74%) reported having received information about the P.J. Settlement.
- Parents reported receiving information regarding the P.J. Settlement from a variety of sources. The two most frequently reported sources of information regarding the P.J. Settlement were mailings (n=320; 47.7%) and PPT meetings (n=100; 14.9%). It should be noted that a summary of the five goals of the P.J. Settlement was included in the parent survey.
- Nearly half of all parents surveyed (n=316; 48.5%) reported that they were familiar with the P.J. Settlement. Parents who reported having attended group trainings (n=21) related to the P.J. Settlement were more likely to report knowing about the P.J. Settlement than parents who received information on the P.J. Settlement from other sources (p<.01).
- Almost half of all families surveyed (n=275; 43.7%) reported that they were in agreement with the P.J. Settlement. Parents who reported that they were familiar with the P.J. Settlement were more likely to be in agreement with the settlement (p<.01). Slightly less than half of all families (n=286; 45.4%) reported that they were not sure as to whether they agreed with the goals of the P.J. Settlement, while 11% (n=69) reported that they were not in agreement with the settlement.
- Approximately one-quarter of parents (n=156; 24.9%) reported that their child with intellectual disabilities spends most of his or her day in regular education classes. Students who attended their home school were more likely to be placed in regular education classes (p<.01). Additionally, preschool children and elementary-aged children were more likely to be placed in regular education classes than middle or high school students (p<.01).
- Almost three-quarters of families (n=470; 70.5%) reported that their child with intellectual disabilities attended their home school for the 2003 – 2004 school year. Data collected from Connecticut school districts on home school placement during the 2002 – 2003 school year indicated that 71.3% of all students with intellectual disabilities attend their home school.

- Less than half of families (n=279; 42.0%) reported that their child with intellectual disabilities participated in extracurricular activities during the 2003 – 2004 school year. Three-quarters (75%) of these students were middle and high school students while the remaining 25% were preschool and elementary students.
- The majority of families (n=604; 89.9%) reported that their child with intellectual disabilities was appropriately identified as having a disability.
- Over half of the families surveyed (n=436; 65.1%) reported that placement in a regular education classroom was discussed when planning their child's special education program for the 2003 – 2004 school year. Consideration of a regular education classroom placement occurred most frequently at the elementary level (p<.01). Discussion of regular education placement occurred less frequently for students currently placed in a special education classroom (p<.01) and more frequently for those students already attending their home school (p<.01).
- Over half of families (n=386; 57.9%) reported that strategies to support their child's success in a regular education classroom were discussed when planning their child's special education program for the 2003 – 2004 school year. Such strategies were more likely to be discussed for elementary students and less likely to be discussed for high school students (p<.01).

Appendix A: P.J. Parent Survey



Please tell us about...your family



Our school district is _____

Our family's ethnicity is

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian or Alaska Native | <input type="checkbox"/> White | <input type="checkbox"/> Black or African American |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Pacific Islander | <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

My family has received information on the P.J. Settlement by (please check all that apply):

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Group training | <input type="checkbox"/> PPT meeting | <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper/radio |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual training | <input type="checkbox"/> Friend | <input type="checkbox"/> Website |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> Parent | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other school personnel (therapist, principal) | <input type="checkbox"/> Mail | <input type="checkbox"/> We have not received information |

We are familiar with the five goals of the P.J. Settlement Agreement.

- Yes No Not sure

We agree with the goals of the P.J. Settlement Agreement.

- Yes No Not sure



Please tell us about ...your child

(answer these questions *only* for your child who has an intellectual disability)



My child's age is _____ My child's sex is (circle one): female male

My child currently attends

- Preschool Elementary Middle/Jr. High School High School

My child spends *most* of the day in

- Regular class Special class

My child currently attends the school he or she would attend if she or he did not have a disability (home school)

- Yes No Not sure

My child will participate in school-sponsored extracurricular activities this year.

- Yes No Not sure

I think my child is appropriately identified as having a disability.

- Yes No Not sure



Please tell us about ...your child's school



When planning your child's education for this year, did the school team talk about your child being in regular classes?

- Yes No Did not attend

When planning your child's education for this year, did the school team talk about ways to help your child be successful in regular classes?

- Yes No Did not attend

Appendix B: Survey Summary Results

Families from 121 school districts responded to the survey. 17 school districts were represented by 10 or more returned surveys (Bridgeport, Bristol, Danbury, East Hartford, Enfield, Hartford, Manchester, Meriden, Middletown, Naugatuck, New Britain, New Haven, North Haven, Norwich, Vernon, Waterbury, and West Hartford).

Our family's ethnicity is:

Ethnicity:	Percent	Frequency
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.6	4
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.0	7
White	67.2	456
Hispanic	12.2	83
Black or African American	12.7	86
Other	0.9	6
Total	94.6	642
Missing	5.4	37

My family has received information on the P.J. Settlement by (please check all that apply):

Information Sources:	Percent	Frequency
Group Training	3.1	21
Individual Training	1.3	9
Teacher	7.5	50
Other School Personnel	4.6	31
PPT Meeting	14.9	100
Friend	4.2	28
Parent	2.5	17
Mail	47.7	320
Newspaper/Radio	7.6	51
Website	1.5	10
Other	7.8	53
We Have Not Received Information	26.3	176

We are familiar with the five goals of the P.J. Settlement Agreement.

	Percent	Frequency
Yes	48.5	316
No	29.0	189
Not Sure	22.5	147
Total	96.0	652
Missing	4.0	27

We agree with the goals of the P.J. Settlement Agreement.

	Percent	Frequency
Yes	43.7	275
No	11.0	69
Not Sure	45.4	286
Total	92.8	630
Missing	7.2	49

My child's age is:

Mean	13.5
Median	14.0
Mode	14.0
Range	3 – 21
Std. Deviation	3.94
Variance	15.5

My child's sex is:

	Percent	Frequency
Male	60.5	387
Female	39.5	253
Total	94.3	640
Missing	5.7	39

My child currently attends:

	Percent	Frequency
Preschool	2.1	14
Elementary	30.0	198
Middle/Jr. High	25.0	165
High School	42.8	282
Total	97.1	659
Missing	2.9	20

My child spends most of the day in:

	Percent	Frequency
Regular Class	24.9	156
Special Class	75.1	470
Total	92.2	626
Missing	7.8	53

My child currently attends the school he or she would attend if he or she did not have a disability (home school).

	Percent	Frequency
Yes	70.5	470
No	24.0	160
Not Sure	5.5	37
Total	98.2	667
Missing	1.8	12

My child will participate in school-sponsored extracurricular activities this year.

	Percent	Frequency
Yes	42.0	279
No	36.1	240
Not Sure	22.0	146
Total	97.9	665
Missing	2.1	14

I think my child is appropriately identified as having an intellectual disability.

	Percent	Frequency
Yes	89.9	604
No	4.9	33
Not Sure	5.2	35
Total	99.0	672
Missing	1.0	7

When planning your child's education for this year, did the school team talk about your child being in regular classes?

	Percent	Frequency
Yes	65.1	436
No	31.5	211
Did Not Attend PPT Mtg	3.4	23
Total	98.7	670
Missing	1.3	9

When planning for your child's education for this year, did the school team talk about ways to help your child be successful in regular classes?

	Percent	Frequency
Yes	57.9	386
No	39.4	263
Did Not Attend PPT Mtg	2.7	18
Total	98.2	667
Missing	1.8	12

Appendix C

P.J. Comparison Demographic Data from the P.J. Parent Survey and State Collected Student Data

The State Department of Education collects annual state and federally required data elements concerning students with disabilities in the state of Connecticut. This data is collected on December 1st of each school year for both students actively receiving special education and related services as well as any students who received special education services in the previous year and had since exited from special education. Data elements used include, but are not limited to: disability and racial prevalence, time with non-disabled peers, educational settings, exit reasons, home school attendance and extracurricular activity participation.

The following is a comparison of demographic data provided by families of children with intellectual disabilities via the P.J. Parent Survey and state collected data from the 2002 – 2003 school year. No statistical analyses were performed due to the fact that surveys were mailed to class members during the 2003 – 2004 school year and the state collected data represents students with intellectual disabilities receiving special education and related service during the 2003 – 2004 school year.

Given these cautions, the following are comparisons between data from the P.J. Parent Survey and state collected student data.

Child's Race/Ethnicity

	P.J. Settlement Parent Survey 2003 – 2004	State MR/ID 2002 – 2003
	n=679	n=3,570
White not Hispanic	67.1% (456)	49.1% (1,753)
Black not Hispanic	12.7% (86)	27.6% (984)
Hispanic	12.2% (83)	21.2% (756)
Asian or Pacific Islander	1.0% (7)	1.5% (52)
Am. Indian or Alaskan Native	0.6% (4)	0.4% (15)
Other	0.9% (6)	0.3% (10)
Missing	5.4% (37)	N/A
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Child's Grade

	P.J. Settlement Parent Survey 2003 – 2004		State MR/ID 2002 – 2003
	n=679		n=3,570
Pre-school	2.1% (14)	PK	0.7% (26)
Elementary	29.2% (198)	K-5	29.0% (1,036)
Middle	24.3% (165)	6-8	25.0% (891)
High	41.5% (282)	9-12	45.3% (1,617)
Missing	2.9% (20)		N/A
Total	100.0%		100.0%

Child's Gender

	P.J. Settlement Parent Survey 2003 – 2004	State MR/ID 2002 – 2003
	n=679	n=3,570
Male	57.0% (387)	56.8% (2,026)
Female	37.3% (253)	43.2% (1,544)
Missing	5.7% (39)	N/A
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Classroom Placement

	P.J. Settlement Parent Survey 2003 – 2004	State MR/ID 2002 – 2003
	n=679	n=3,570
Regular Class	24.9% (156)	11.7% (418)
Special Education Class	75.1% (470)	56.5% (2,017)
Resource Room	N/A	31.8% (1,135)
Missing	7.8%(53)	N/A
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Educated in Home School

	P.J. Settlement Parent Survey 2003 – 2004	State MR/ID 2002 – 2003
	n=679	n=3,570
Yes	70.5% (470)	71.1% (2,538)
No	24.0% (160)	28.9% (1,032)
Not Sure	5.5% (37)	N/A
Missing	1.8% (12)	N/A
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Participation in Extracurricular Activities

	P.J. Settlement Parent Survey 2003 – 2004	State MR/ID 2002 – 2003
	n=679	n=3,570
Yes	42.0% (263)	20.1% (718)
No	36.1% (240)	79.9% (2,852)
Not Sure	22.0% (146)	N/A
Missing	2.1% (14)	N/A
Total	100.0%	100.0%