

Exploring a Statewide IEP System for Oregon

Spring 2023 Engagement Summary

August 2023



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Background

The Oregon Department of Education’s (ODE) Office of Enhancing Student Opportunities (OESO) sought input on a statewide special education Individualized Education Program (IEP) system in spring 2023.

The following factors contributed to ODE seeking input on this topic:

- A recent Secretary of State audit suggested that ODE could better support students with disabilities by adopting a statewide IEP system that serves a similar role as ecWeb in Oregon’s EI/ECSE system.
- An outside expert recently suggested that a statewide special education IEP system would be beneficial for Oregon’s special education system.
- There were indications of legislative interest in Oregon in this topic.
- Multiple states have or are in the process of working towards a statewide IEP system.

OESO seeks to understand the sentiment of Oregon’s education community regarding the potential benefits and concerns of a statewide special education IEP system.

Toward that end, this summary describes the outcomes of the statewide survey conducted by OESO, along with the findings from two engagement sessions organized by OESO. The first engagement session specifically focused on special education directors in Oregon, while the second session was open to all individuals who expressed interest.

Demographic Information for Survey Respondents

ODE received a total of 572 unique responses to the survey.

Respondents were asked to provide basic information about their role. Chart 1 depicts the number of respondents by role, and is based on [this data](#).

The majority of respondents were teachers, with nearly 43% of the respondents indicating they were either a general or special education teacher. Just over 25% of the respondents indicated that they were school administrators. Unfortunately, less than 1% of the responses were from parents or advocates, suggesting the need for further evaluation of the specific beliefs of this group about a statewide IEP system.

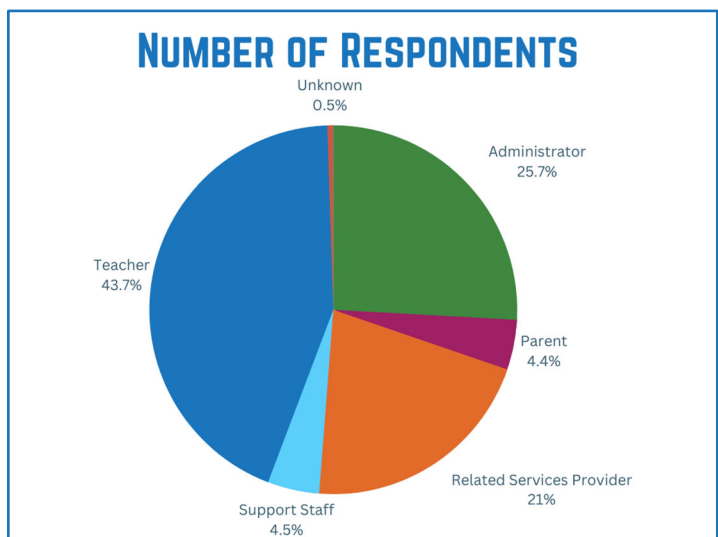


Chart 1: Survey Respondents by Role

Respondents were also asked to provide information about the school district or education service district (ESD) they were affiliated with. Respondents represented a total of 114 out of 197 school districts and ESDs, however 78%, or 89 out of 114, of the districts had 5 or fewer respondents. Only 5 districts had 20 or more respondents, which included Sisters School District (20 respondents), Willamette ESD (30 respondents), Woodburn School District (42 respondents), Eugene 4J (46 Respondents), and Bend La-Pine School District (77 respondents).

[This document](#) contains more information about the districts and their respondents.

Results

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the idea of a statewide IEP system on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree." Based on [this data](#), nearly 60% of respondents selected a rating of 4 or 5, indicating that they strongly agreed or agreed with the idea. 24% of respondents selected a rating of 1 or 2, indicating that they strongly disagreed or disagreed with the idea. Nearly 16% of respondents selected a rating of 3, indicating that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the idea.

Respondents were also asked to identify potential benefits from a list provided in the survey of a statewide Individualized Education Program (IEP) system. The table below presents the potential benefits and the number of respondents who agreed with each potential benefit. More than 82% of respondents believed that the ease of transferring records would be a potential benefit of the system. More than 69% of respondents believed that a statewide IEP system would improve consistency in IEP implementation across schools, and more than 66% of respondents believed that a statewide IEP system would streamline the documentation and record-keeping processes.

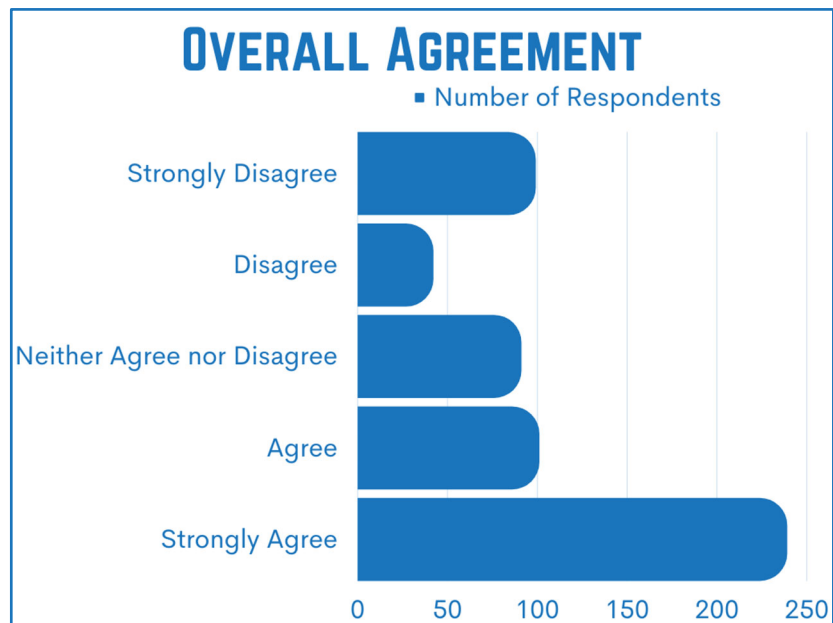


Figure 1: Overall Agreement with Idea of Statewide IEP System from Respondents

Potential Benefit	Number of Respondents
Ease of transferring records	472

Potential Benefit	Number of Respondents
Improved consistency in IEP implementation across schools and districts	397
Streamlined documentation and record-keeping processes	379
Better tracking and monitoring of student progress and outcomes	253
Reduced administrative burden on teachers and school staff	242
Enhanced communication and collaboration among students, parents, teachers, and administrators	225
More equitable services and support for all students with IEPs	184
Easier sharing of best practices and professional development opportunities for educators	183
Increased public awareness and understanding of IEPs and special education services	158
Greater access to resources and support for schools	145

Respondents were also asked to identify [potential barriers](#) to a statewide Individualized Education Program (IEP) system. The table below presents the potential barriers and the number of respondents who agreed with the potential barrier. More than 67% of respondents were concerned that inadequate training and support for educators and administrators to adopt the new system would be a barrier to the successful implementation of a statewide IEP system. Nearly 58% of respondents felt that a statewide IEP system had the potential for a “one-size-fits-all” approach that may not meet individual student needs and nearly 53% of respondents felt that insufficient funding to support a statewide system could be a significant barrier to the successful implementation of a statewide IEP system. Just over 47% of participants also felt that increased bureaucracy and administrative burden, loss of local control and decision-making flexibility, as well as difficulty in effectively implementing and managing the system across all schools and districts would be potential barriers as well.

Potential Barriers	Number of Respondents
Inadequate training and support for educators and administrators to adopt the new system	387
Potential for "one-size-fits-all" approach that may not meet individual student needs	330
Insufficient funding to support a statewide system	302
Loss of local control and decision-making flexibility	271
Increased bureaucracy and administrative burden	271
Difficulty in effectively implementing and managing the system across all schools and districts	270

Potential Barriers	Number of Respondents
Resistance or lack of buy-in from partners (students, parents, teachers, administrators)	203
Privacy and data security concerns	167
Challenges in ensuring equity and accessibility for all students	127

In sum, respondents were asked [whether they would support a statewide IEP system](#) if it met their needs and addressed their concerns. More than 61% of respondents indicated that they would be either supportive or extremely supportive of such a system, while only 23.4% were either not supportive or somewhat not supportive. This suggests that there is a significant interest among education professionals in a statewide IEP system and the potential benefits it could provide.

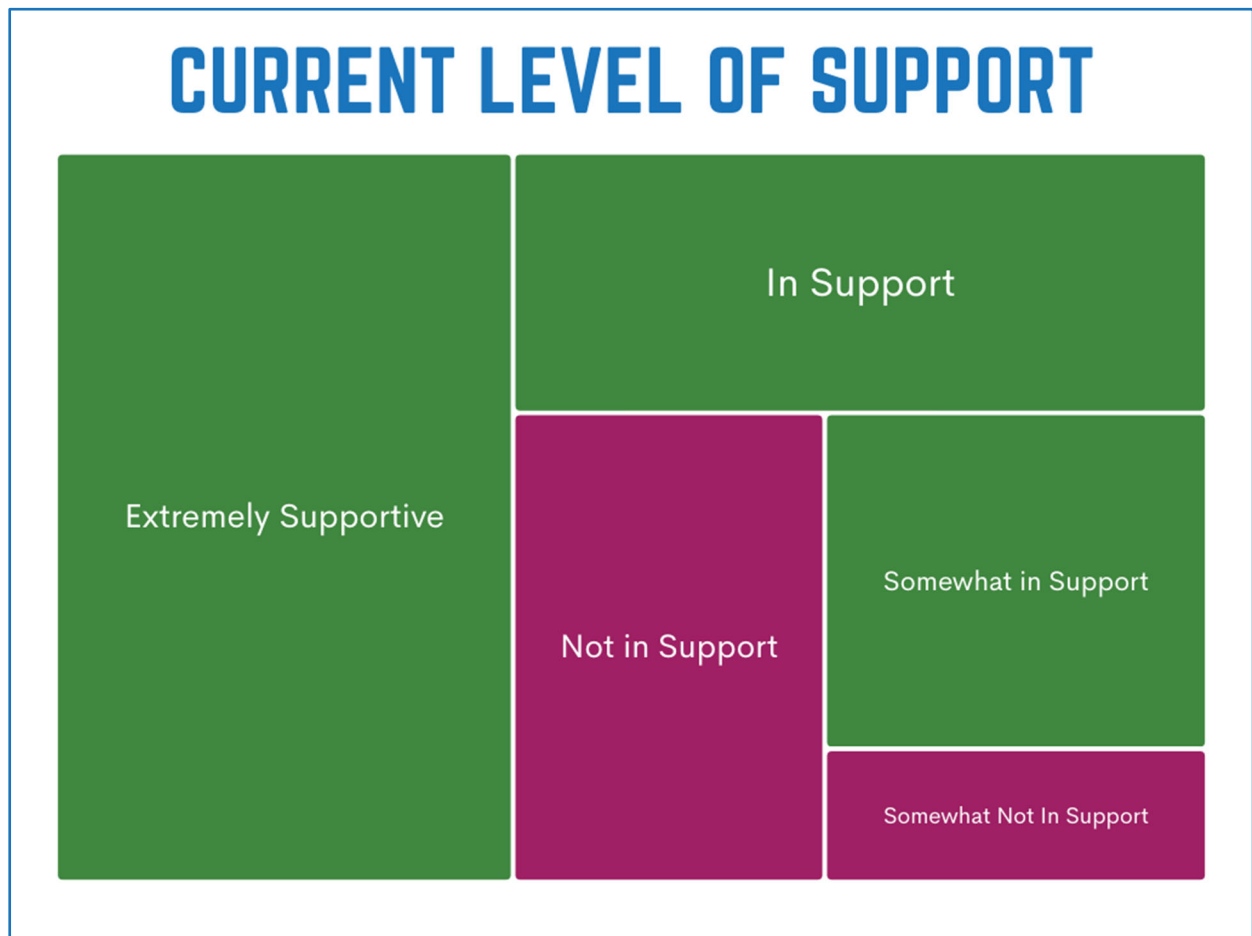


Figure 2: Current Level of Support

Looking Ahead

While a majority of respondents agreed with the idea of a statewide Individualized Education Program (IEP) system (59.44%), the survey results identified significant barriers that must be

addressed prior to implementation. While many of these barriers are within the Oregon Department of Education's (ODE) control, many also require action by other governmental bodies, including the legislature.

Prior to implementation, the following barriers will have to be addressed:

- Further evaluation of the feelings and needs of parents, students, and advocates related to a statewide IEP system.
- Further research into the capability of a statewide system to allow for:
 - An individualized approach that meets all student needs.
 - Decreases in bureaucracy and administrative burden in the special education paperwork process.
 - Ensuring appropriate local control and decision-making flexibility.
- Identification and allocation of a consistent, reliable funding source that allows for not only the implementation of the system but adequate training and support for educators and administrators to adopt the new system.
- Funding and allocation for ODE staff with appropriate expertise to effectively implement and manage the system across all schools and districts.

ODE believes that these barriers must be addressed prior to moving towards adoption of a statewide IEP system in order to ensure that it is successful and meets the needs of all students, families, staff, school districts, and communities.