

A Survey Report of County Board Services and Supports for Children Ages 3-21

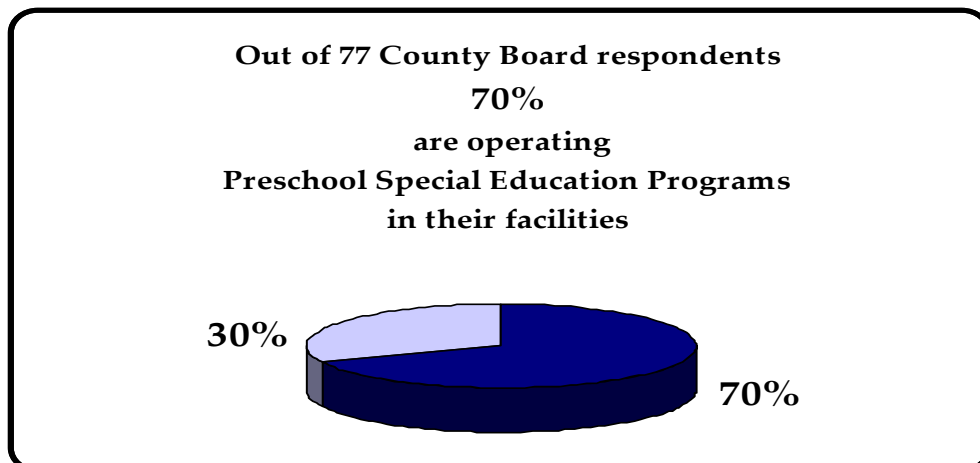
The Ohio Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (ODMR/DD) joined with the Ohio Association of Services for Children (OASC) in the Spring of 2007 to conduct a survey to determine the nature of educational and support services being provided by county boards of mr/dd for children with disabilities (ages 3-21) and their families. Data generated from the survey offers a clearer understanding of the role county boards play in the provision of educational services, both in county board operated facilities and public school settings. In addition, the data presents a snapshot of other direct support services outside the educational arena that county boards provide. Most significantly, the data suggests a baseline for highlighting county board service provision for children that is useful for future policy and planning discussions.

Survey Results

Seventy-seven counties chose to participate in the survey. This 88% response rate provides a framework to formulate a fairly accurate account of what is happening statewide with regard to county board involvement with children and their families, in educational services, as well as other support options. The survey separately addressed both the preschool (3-5 years) and school-age (6-21 years) populations.

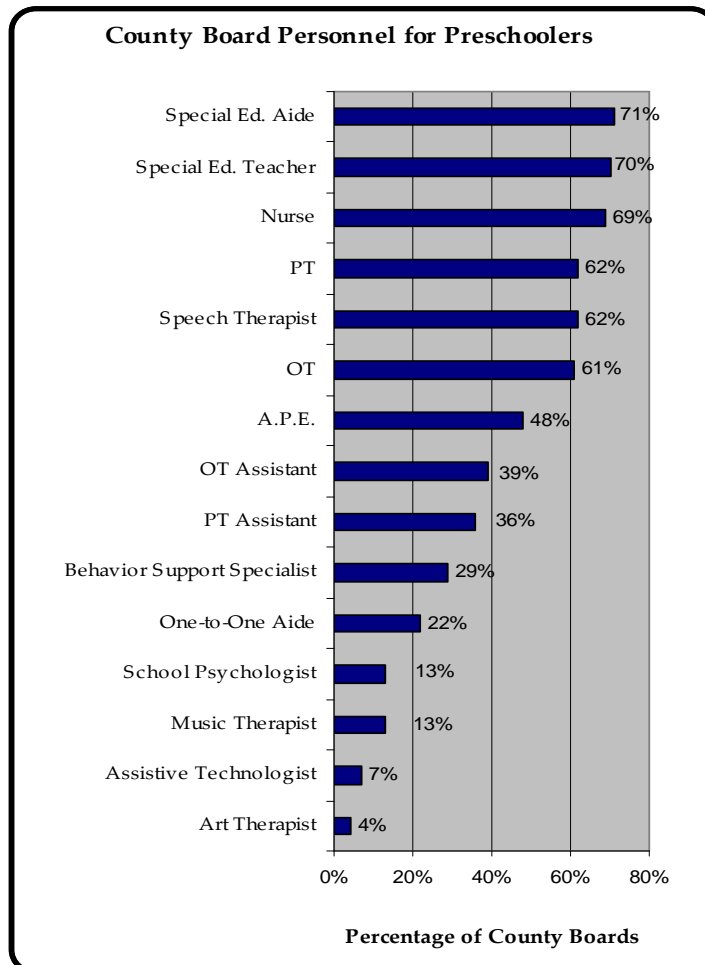
Preschool Data

Survey data indicated that 70% of the 77 county respondents are operating special education programs for preschoolers in a county board operated facility. Data indicated a total of 549 Special Education Teachers, Special Education Aides, and One-to-One Aides are employed or contracted by the county boards to staff those programs.

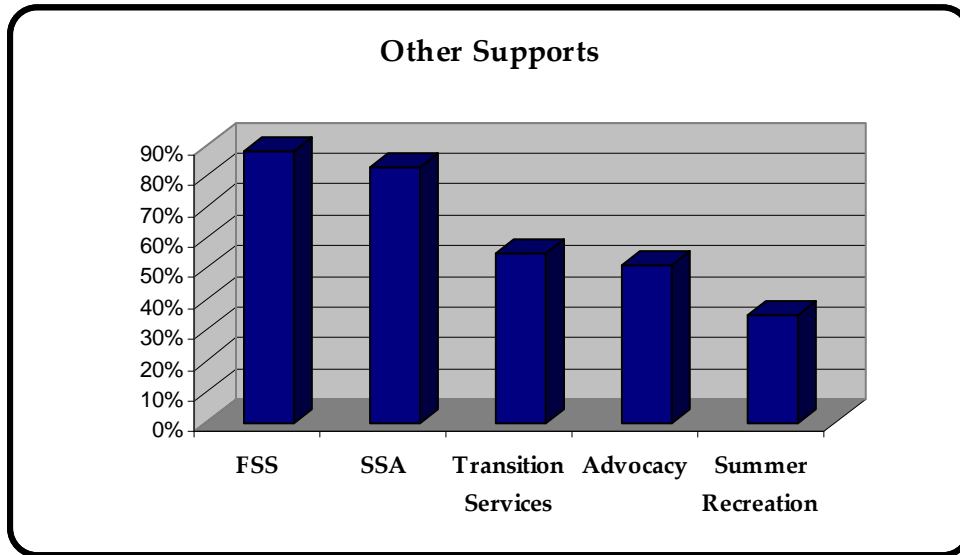


Conversely, about 8% of the 77 county respondents indicated providing preschool special education in public school facilities, employing or contracting a combined total of 125 Special Education Teachers, Special Education Aides, and One-to-One Aides. The ODMR/DD 2006 Individual Information Form (IIF) data reported that 3409 children ages 3-5 were enrolled in county board preschool programs. Overall, these numbers indicate a significantly high degree of involvement of county boards of mr/dd in the early education arena.

In addition to teaching staff, well over half of the county boards, nearly 62%, consistently reported providing Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Speech Therapy, and 69% indicated having School Nursing services for preschoolers. About a third offer Behavior Support services. Only a small percentage, less than 15% of county boards reported having staff providing Art Therapy, Music Therapy, and Assistive Technology services. Therapy services were offered primarily in the county operated facility; however, six counties reported working with their school district to offer these services in the public school settings. A third of the counties offer services at home for preschoolers, but in most cases only in extenuating circumstances. About 20% of the respondents offer Extended School Year options.



Outside of educational services, county boards offer an array of other support programs. Nearly 90% of county boards offer Family Support Services (FSS) and Service and Support Administration (SSA) for preschoolers. Some of the other supports offered are identified below.



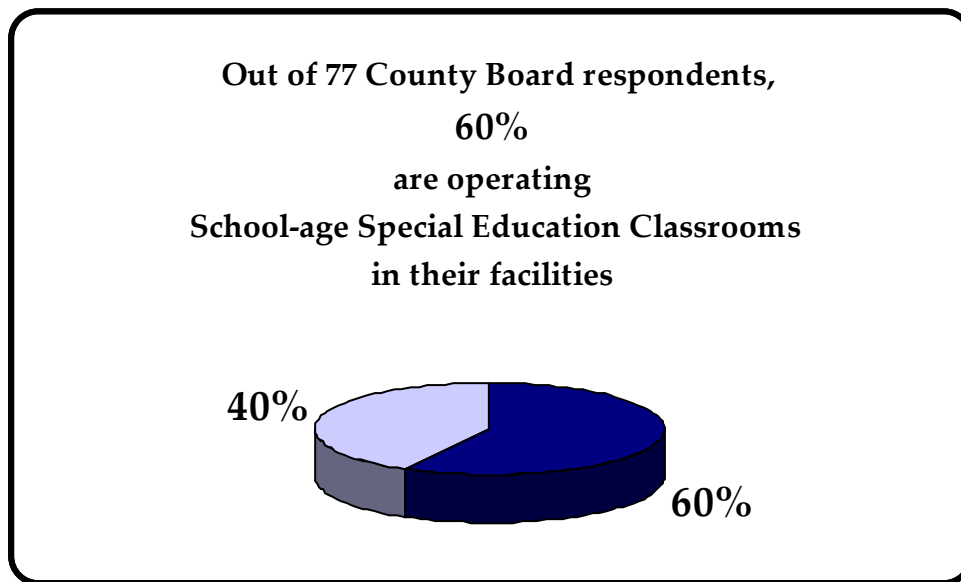
The majority of respondents reported providing transportation services for preschoolers. The modes of transportation varied, but the use of county board operated buses ranked number one, followed by use of other agency buses, and finally reimbursement to the family.

Counties consistently identified the Creative Curriculum and the Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming Systems (AEPS) as the most utilized curricula for preschoolers, and 42% of the counties indicated a willingness to be resources for other counties needing technical assistance around curriculum issues. Counties reported using a variety of standardized assessment instruments, including Get It-Got It-Go, HELP, Creative Curriculum, Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social Emotional, MOVE, AEPS, and the Learning Accomplishment Profile.

Overall, the data support that county boards continue to sustain a strong role within their local communities, and collectively statewide, in the provision of early childhood services and supports for preschoolers with disabilities. This presence is further evident in the 40% of county boards who are currently operating collaborative Early Childhood Family Centers, housing multiple service providing agencies which include both preschoolers with disabilities and their typically developing peers.

School-Age Data

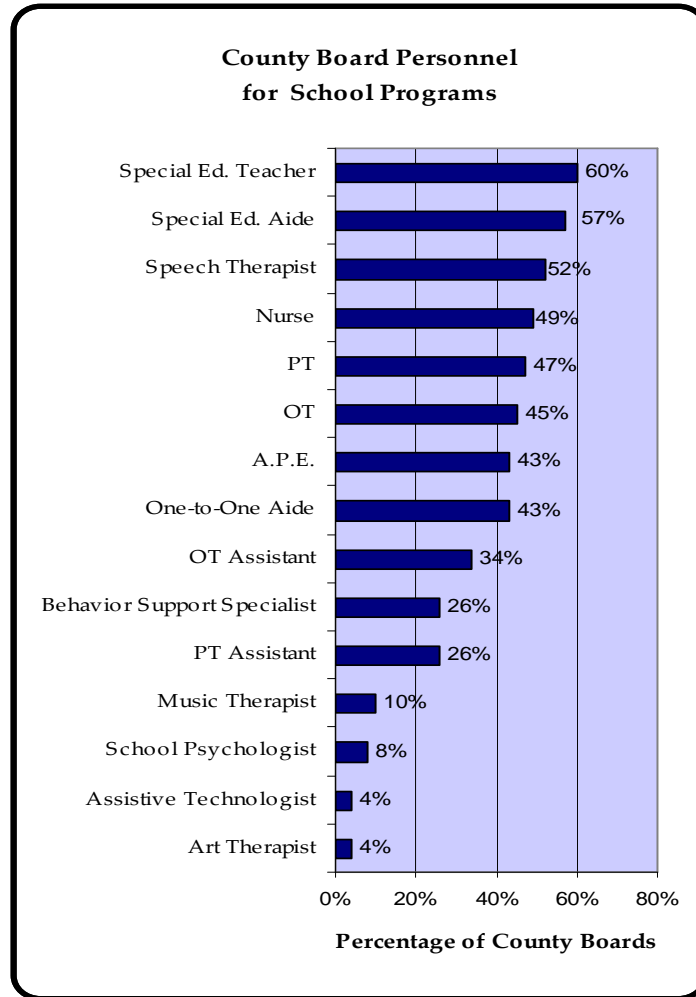
Survey data indicated that 60% of the 77 county respondents are operating special education programs for 6-21 year olds in a county board operated facility. County boards are employing or contracting a combined total of 930 Special Education Teachers, Special Education Aides and One-to-One Aides to staff those programs.



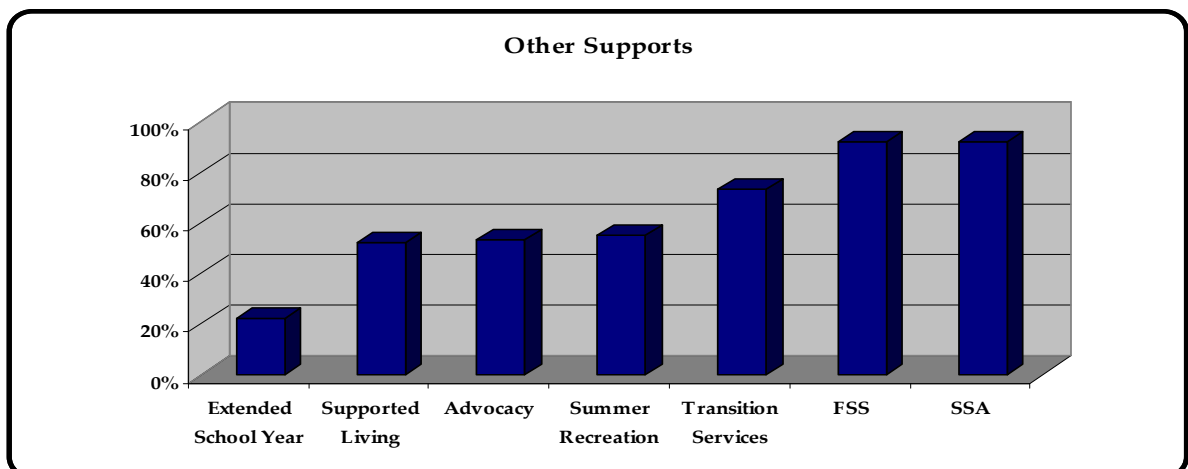
About 15% of the county boards indicated providing special education services in public school facilities, employing or contracting a combined total of 135 Special Education Teachers, Special Education Aides and One-to-One Aides. The ODMR/DD 2006 Individual Information Form reported that 2960 children ages 6-21 were enrolled in county board school programs. Again, these figures indicate a fairly significant number of county boards of mr/dd still in the business of providing special education services.

In addition to teaching staff, just about half of the county boards consistently reported providing Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Speech Therapy and School Nursing services for their school-age population in a county board operated facility. Only a very small percentage, less than 10% of county boards, reported having staff that provide services such as Art Therapy, Music Therapy, and Assistive Technology. Ten percent of counties reported they are working with their school districts to offer these services in the public school setting. A small percentage, 22%, offers some of these services at home, and the same number of respondents offers Extended School Year options.

The following graph depicts personnel serving the school-age population:



Again, over 90% of county boards offer Family Support Services (FSS) and Service and Support Administration (SSA) for 6-21 year olds. Half the county boards provide Summer Recreation, Supported Living, and Advocacy support. The survey did not address the services being provided to those individuals ages 16-21 who may opt for county board adult programs.



The majority of respondents reported providing transportation services. For the school-age population, county board operated busses and reimbursement were ranked equally as the most utilized modes, followed by the use of other agency busses.

Data was inconsistent with regard to naming a specific standardized instructional curriculum for the school-age population. Most respondents spoke in generalities about using a functional curriculum, or referred to following the Ohio Department of Education state content standards. Nearly 65% of the counties are administering alternative assessments for their school-age population, with data charts, checklists, observations, and captioned photos as the top collection of evidence methods being used.

Generally, the data support that many county boards continue to maintain a presence within their local communities, in the provision of special education for youth ages 6-21. While these county boards sustain a long-standing history of providing school-age services, narrative comments provided by respondents suggest that several county boards are experiencing a decrease in their school-age population, as school districts are now serving these youth. Statewide, there is still much variation from county to county with regard to sustaining a county board of mr/dd operated school program.

Considerations

As Governor Strickland's Turnaround Ohio plan calls for strategic and systemic policy and program improvements around school readiness, this survey data offers a quick-glance status check of the county boards and what they are offering in terms of educational, developmental, and family supports for children ages 3-21. This data, viewed in tandem with the local financial contributions supporting these services, as well as provision of Medicaid waivers for this population -- places the county boards as an integral player in Ohio's system of services and supports for children.

Understanding the differences among county boards with regard to their involvement in the children's service arena, and recognizing the varied nature of the county board system collectively is important. These survey results offer information that can be considered in both state and local discussions around children's policy and operational planning.

Many thanks to members of the OASC, and multiple stakeholders, for partnering with the Department in the development of the survey. Should you wish to obtain additional or county-specific survey information, please contact ODMR/DD's Office of Children and Family Supports at 614-466-7317 or e-mail jody.fisher@dmr.state.oh.us.