

# Parent Voice in Summit County

WHAT FAMILIES ARE TELLING US ABOUT EDUCATION, ACCESS, AND SUPPORT



## Overview

In 2025, the Summit County Parent Coalition (SCPC), in partnership with Summit Education Initiative (SEI), launched the **Parent Voice Survey** to better understand the experiences, challenges, and priorities of families across Summit County.

More than **600 parents and caregivers** shared their perspectives on navigating school systems, accessing resources, and supporting their children's success.

This brief highlights key findings from both quantitative and qualitative responses, elevating parent voice to inform community action, system improvement, and more responsive support for families.

**600**  
survey  
responses



## What We Heard From Families



Across all responses, one message was consistent:

**Families want to be heard, supported, and treated as partners in their children's education.**

Parents expressed deep commitment to their children's success—but also shared frustration with system complexity, inconsistent communication, and barriers to accessing support.

## Key Findings at a Glance

**22%**

feel their child's **voice is clearly heard** in school

**26%**

reported **challenges navigating** special education or behavioral supports

**36%**

feel **fully equipped to advocate** for their child

**1 in 3**

parents **struggle to find or understand information** about resources

**34%**

identified **after-school/extended day programming** as a top need

## Theme 1: Communication Is the Foundation and a Major Barrier

Parents consistently identified communication as both a critical need and a persistent challenge. Even when communication exists, it is often inconsistent—varying by school, staff member, or situation. This creates confusion, limits trust, and makes it harder for families to engage meaningfully.

Many families described:

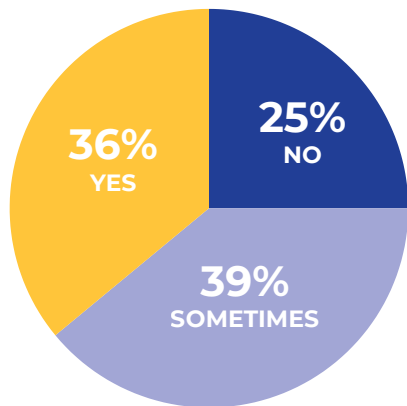
- ▶ **Difficulty finding clear, consistent information**
- ▶ **Unreturned calls or delayed responses**
- ▶ **Conflicting guidance from school staff**
- ▶ **Feeling dismissed when raising concerns**



*My biggest obstacle is communication. Admin seems to be more reactive and less proactive.*

## Theme 2: Parents Are Advocating - But Often Without Support

### PARENTS: DO YOU FEEL EQUIPPED TO ADVOCATE?



Parents see advocacy as part of their role—but many feel they are navigating systems alone. For families of children with disabilities, advocacy is often more complex and ongoing.

Families described:

- ▶ **Learning to advocate through trial and error**
- ▶ **Limited awareness of available resources**
- ▶ **Structural barriers like time, transportation, and work schedules**
- ▶ **Resistance when raising concerns**

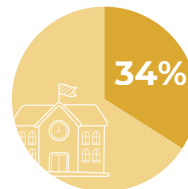
*I do advocate, but am often met with adversity.*

## Theme 3: After-School and Childcare Gaps Are a Top Priority

Across all responses, one of the clearest and most urgent needs was access to after-school and extended-day programming. This challenge cuts across income levels and demographics, indicating a broader systems gap.

Parents described:

- ▶ **Work schedules that do not align with school dismissal times**
- ▶ **Limited availability of affordable, high-quality programs**
- ▶ **Lack of options for children with additional needs**

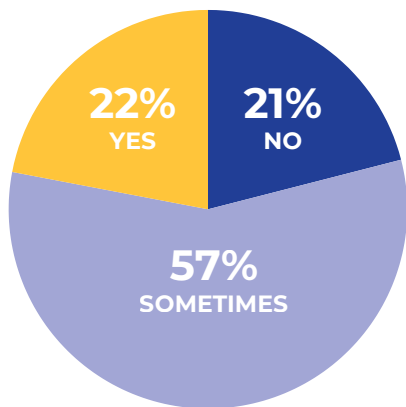


**of parents said after-school programming is a top support need**

*After school childcare options. Most parents work and need additional hours.*

## Theme 4: Students' Voices Are Not Consistently Heard

STUDENTS:  
DO YOU FEEL HEARD?



Families reported mixed experiences when it comes to whether their children feel heard and valued in school. For students with disabilities or behavioral needs, these challenges were often more pronounced.

Many families described:

- ▶ Positive relationships with individual teachers
- ▶ Inconsistent experiences across classrooms or schools
- ▶ Concerns that self-advocacy is misinterpreted as behavior issues



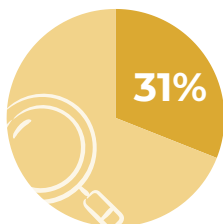
*As my children become older, their self-advocacy is becoming interpreted as disrespect.*

## Theme 5: Systems Are Complex and Overwhelming

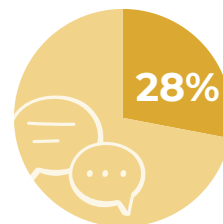
Many parents described education systems as difficult to navigate, particularly when seeking support. For single parents and families managing multiple responsibilities, these barriers are even more significant.

Key challenges included:

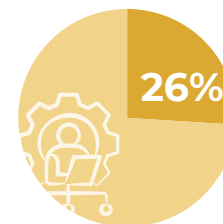
- ▶ Lack of clear, centralized information
- ▶ Unclear policies and procedures
- ▶ Limited access to guidance or support
- ▶ Inconsistent implementation of services



said it's difficult to find or understand information



reported communication challenges

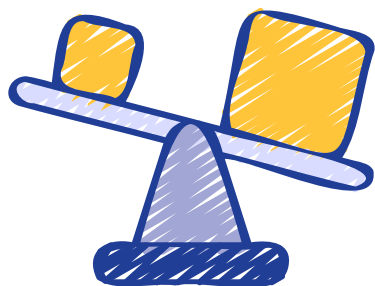


reported special education or behavioral system challenges



*All of it is complex.*

## Theme 6: Inequities Persist Across Communities



While many families reported positive experiences, the data shows that not all families experience systems in the same way. Parents more likely to report barriers include single-parent households, lower-income families, black parents, and families in urban school districts.

Additionally:

- ▶ Urban families reported more barriers to accessing resources
- ▶ Significant gaps exist in access to out-of-school-time programming
- ▶ Differences in school engagement and preparedness vary by community

These patterns highlight the importance of centering equity in system design and improvement.

## What Families Are Asking For

Across responses, parents were clear about what would make the biggest difference:



**Stronger, more consistent communication**



**Safer school environments & better responses to bullying**



**Expanded after-school and childcare options**



**More accessible and transparent systems**



**Greater support for students with disabilities**



**Actually listen to the parents when they speak.**

## Why This Matters

Parent voice provides critical insight into how systems function in practice.

These findings highlight opportunities for schools, community organizations, and leaders to:

- ▶ Strengthen communication and trust with families
- ▶ Improve access to resources and supports
- ▶ Expand out-of-school-time opportunities
- ▶ Better support students with diverse needs



## Looking Ahead



The Summit County Parent Coalition will continue to:

- ▶ Engage families in identifying priorities and solutions
- ▶ Share findings with schools, partners, and decision-makers
- ▶ Strengthen feedback loops between families and systems
- ▶ Support parent-led efforts to improve outcomes for children

As this work continues, parent voice will remain a critical driver of system improvement across Summit County.