

**2010 Special Education Parent Survey  
Needham Public Schools  
September 2010**

**Introduction**

In April, the Needham Public Schools administered a system-wide survey of its parents of students identified with special education needs. This survey was constructed by the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) and the Director of Student Development and Program Evaluation. The survey is part of a special education program review begun in the fall of 2009 with the gathering of information from stakeholders through focus groups (see report at [http://rwd1.needham.k12.ma.us/student\\_development/](http://rwd1.needham.k12.ma.us/student_development/)). The purpose of the survey was to gain a better understanding of parent satisfaction with current special education programs and practices and to identify areas of programming that need further attention. The survey was administered electronically. Parents were asked to complete one survey for each child enrolled in special education.

135 of 717 parents/guardians responded to the survey, yielding an 18.8% return rate, down from a 26% return rate on a similar survey in 2008. Low response rate creates limitations in interpretation of the survey data, and is further exacerbated by the uneven distribution of subgroups, explained in the following demographics.

**Response Demographics**

Parents/guardians identified themselves in several ways: by their child's school level, or out-of-district and by their child's primary disability. The following charts summarize this data.

**Survey Count by Level**

Level	# of Surveys Sent	# of Surveys Returned	Response Rate of Subgroup	% of Total Returned Surveys	Percentage of Students at this level in the district
Preschool	32	7	21.9%	5.2%	4.5%
Elementary	245	56	22.9%	41.5%	34.2%
Middle	183	36	19.7%	26.7%	25.5%
HS	205	34	16.6%	25.2%	28.6%
OOD	52	2	3.9%	1.5%	7.3%
TOTAL	717	135	18.8%	100%	100%

**Survey Count by Disability**

Student's Primary Disability	# of Surveys Sent	# of Surveys Returned	Response Rate of Subgroup	% of Total Returned Surveys	Percentage of Students with this disability in the district
Health	117	7	6%	5.2%	17.1%
Specific Learning	188	56	30%	41.5%	27.4%
Emotional	40	10	25%	7.4%	5.8%
Autism	79	22	28%	16.3%	11.5%
Communication	134	11	8.2%	8.1%	19.5%
Neurological	58	15	25.9%	11.1%	8.4%
Dev. Delay/Intell. Impairment	64	14	21.9%	10.4%	9.3%
Other	37	0	0	0	1%
TOTAL	717	135	18.8%	100	100%

Several cautions need to be made about the data:

- The overall return rate of 18.8% is low. This rate is not high enough to ensure that the results reflect the opinions of the general population.
- Because the return rate for Preschool and Out of District parents is less than 10 of the IEP students in that category, these responses will not be disaggregated and reported as separate categories. The same is true of parents who indicated Health Disability (7). **Throughout the survey report, if fewer than 10 parents indicated their opinion on a question, those results are not reported for that question. This means that for questions where parents responded “Don’t Know/Does Not Apply”, only responses indicating a choice of Yes, No or Agree/Disagree, were counted.**
- Surveys do not always produce reliable data. Studies have shown that respondents tend to be somewhat more interested, involved, and have stronger feelings than non-respondents. It will take several more administrations of this survey to determine whether the responses are consistent over time and whether parent perceptions of the district’s response to the survey results have been positive.
- In many instances the percentages of respondents are not reflective of the special education demographics in the district. For this reason, the opinions of certain populations may be over- or under-represented. For example, the percentage of respondents from the Elementary School (41.5%) is higher than its portion of the special education population (34.2%) and parents of out of district students returned just 3.9% of their surveys, while they represent 7.3% of parents who received the survey.
- The parents with students with either Health or Communication disabilities are under-represented in the survey (6% and 8.2% respectfully), while parents of students with Autism and Specific Learning Disability are over-represented, by percentage of surveys returned. Caution must be used when interpreting results based on responses that do not more closely match the district demographics.

### **Results**

The survey consisted of 56 questions related to parent satisfaction with their child’s special education program. There were 10 questions regarding the SEPAC and an open-ended question for each of these two sections. In answering questions, respondents were given the option of picking “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Disagree,” or “Strongly Disagree.” Because people have different measures for the strength of their opinions, the “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” have been combined into a “Satisfied” rating, while “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree” were combined into a “Dissatisfied” rating. Parents could also indicate that a question was not applicable to them or that they did not know about the area of questioning. These responses were not counted as responses for the purposes of calculating “Satisfied” parents. For the purposes of this report, differences of five or more percentage points will be considered significant when analyzing data. The following abbreviations for categories will be used throughout the Report:

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Level or Disability Name</b>
Elem	Elementary Schools
MS	Middle Schools
HS	High School
Neur	Neurological
Autism	Autism
SLD	Specific Learning Disability
Comm	Communication
Em	Emotional Disability
DD	Developmental Delay/Intellectual Impairment

The survey covers a number of areas, and for ease of analysis, responses have been grouped into categories for this report. They were not necessarily grouped in this manner on the questionnaire itself.

**PARENT-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP (Questions 3, 4, 5, 12)**

According to federal and state law, parents and professionals are equal members of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team. These four questions represent the parents’ perception of the school’s efforts to include them as partners. 83.9% of parents are satisfied with the parent-school partnership. A question regarding the “district asks me for my input to evaluate the programming for my child” yielded a range of ratings, from 35% (parents of children with autism) to 81.5% (HS parents). The District average on question #12, 68.1%, reflects these lower responses. This result requires further discussion and efforts to get parent feedback on programs.

**Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Level (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

Statement	District	Elem	MS	HS
3. Included as an equal partner in planning my child’s program.	88.1%	83.9%	86.1%	94.1%
4. Teachers and administrators show sensitivity to students and families.	93.9	96.2	91.7	91.2
5. Teachers and administrators encourage me to participate in decision-making.	85.5	85.2	77.1	91.2
12. The district asks for my input to evaluate the programming for my child.	68.1	63.5	60.6	81.5
AVG.	83.9	82.2	78.9	89.5

**Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Disability (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

Statement	Neur	Autism	SLD	Com	Em	DD
3. Included as an equal partner in planning my child’s program.	86.7%	81.8%	91.1%	90.9%	77.8%	92.9%
4. Teachers and administrators show sensitivity to students and families.	93.3	90.5	94.6	100	88.9	100
5. Teachers and administrators encourage me to participate in decision-making.	78.6	85.7	85.7	90	88.9	92.9
12. The district asks for my input to evaluate the programming for my child.	70	35	76.5	75	80	76.9
AVG.	82.2	73.3	87	89	83.9	90.7

**STAFF ACCESSIBILITY (Questions 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)**

These questions focus on parent satisfaction with staff availability and effectiveness of communication. Overall, most parents in the district, 85.5%, are satisfied with staff accessibility and communication. In fact, well over 9 in 10 parents rate school personnel as respectful. The area that scored lowest is the “level of communication regarding my child’s progress”. Overall, 73.1% of parents were satisfied, but with only 58.9% of elementary parents indicating satisfaction with level of communication regarding progress. This same lack of satisfaction is seen in the parents of children with Autism, with only 54.5% indicating satisfaction with the level of communication regarding student progress. Parents of students with Specific Learning Disability (67.9%) were also significantly less satisfied than the district as a whole.

**Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Level (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

Statement	District	Elem	MS	HS
6. School staff are easily accessible and available.	90.3%	91.1%	91.7%	85.3%
7. School personnel are respectful with me.	97.8	98.2	100	94.1
8. School staff communicates effectively and frequently enough to keep me informed of my child’s progress.	73.1	62.5	83.3	73.5
9. I am satisfied with the level of communication regarding progress.	73.1	58.9	83.3	79.4
10. School staff returns phone calls/emails in a timely manner.	93.1	93.3	91.7	87.5
AVG.	85.5	80.8	90	84

**Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Disability (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

Statement	Neur	Autism	SLD	Comm	Em	DD
6. School staff are easily accessible and available.	86.7%	86.4%	89.3%	100%	88.9%	100%
7. School personnel are respectful with me.	100	90.9	98.2	100	100	100
8. School staff communicates effectively and frequently enough to keep me informed of my child's progress.	86.7	68.2	66.1	72.7	77.8	92.9
9. I am satisfied with the level of communication regarding progress.	86.7	54.5	67.9	81.8	77.8	92.9
10. School staff returns phone calls/emails in a timely manner.	86.7	90.5	94.5	100	88.9	100
AVG.	89.4	78.1	83.2	90.9	86.7	97.2

**LEARNING ABOUT DISABILITIES – Question 13**

Parents had a wide range of opinions about how well the school system addresses the issue of disability awareness. About half of the parents surveyed in the district were dissatisfied (53.6%) with the schools' efforts to educate students and families about disabilities. Middle School parents (36.4%) were particularly dissatisfied with the opportunities to learn about disabilities. Overall, 38% of respondents did not express an opinion either way.

**Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Level (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

Statement	District	Elem	MS	HS
13. School offers opportunities for students and families to learn about disabilities	53.6%	57.9%	36.4%	57.9%

**Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Disability (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

Statement	Neur	Autism	SLD	Comm	EM	DD
13. School offers opportunities for students and families to learn about disabilities	60%	72.7%	60%	75%	71.4%	60%

**IEP PROCESS: STUDENT EVALUATIONS (Questions 15, 16, 17)**

Most parents are satisfied that evaluations conducted by Needham professionals accurately reflect their child's needs (81.5%) and include specific recommendations (81.5%). Overall, 84.3% of parents are satisfied with the manner in which the results are communicated to them. Two groups of parents expressed less satisfaction with the evaluation process, parents of children with Autism and of children with emotional disabilities.

**Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Level (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

Statement	District	Elem	MS	HS
15. Evaluations accurately reflect my child's needs.	81.5%	86.8%	79.4%	94.1%
16. Evaluations include specific recommendations.	81.5	86.8	73.5	79.4
17. Evaluations are communicated in a manner that helps me understand my child's disability and learning needs.	84.3	84	88.6	81.8
AVG.	82.4	85.9	80.5	85.1

**Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Disability (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

Statement	Neur	Autism	SLD	Comm	Em	DD
15. Evaluations accurately reflect my child's needs.	85.7%	75%	89.1%	100%	70%	92.9%
16. Evaluations include specific recommendations.	73.3	73.7	83.6	90.9	66.7	92.3
17. Evaluations are communicated in a manner that helps me understand my child's disability and learning needs.	80	60	83.9	100	77.8	100
AVG.	79.7	69.6	85.5	97	71.5	95.1

**IEP PROCESS: TEAM PROCESS (Questions 11, 14, 19, 20)**

According to federal law, parent concerns and requests must be documented, either in the IEP itself, or as part of the cover letter that accompanies the IEP when it is mailed to the parent. The IEP itself must reflect the TEAM meeting discussion and if there is disagreement between the school and the parents, the school has responsibility for explaining resolution options to the parents. Overall, 83.4% of parents are satisfied with the IEP Team Process, with this satisfaction being relatively stable across all three levels of the district. The area of least satisfaction, #11, was the explanation for parents when they disagree with the school’s decision, with 72.5% of parents expressing satisfaction. When the responses are disaggregated for parents by disability, the parents of children with Autism and emotional disability are less satisfied overall in the area of Team Process.

**Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Level (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

Statement	District	Elem	MS	HS
11. The school explains options for parents when they disagree with the school’s decision.	72.5%	70.2%	78.6%	72.4%
14. All of my concerns and requests were documented on the IEP or in the IEP cover letter.	85.4	84.9	79.4	94.1
19. The IEP reflects the TEAM meeting discussion.	91.7	90.7	91.7	94.1
20. The IEP tells how progress towards the goals will be measured.	84.1	83.3	80	91.2
AVG.	83.4	82.3	82.4	88

**Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Disability (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

Statement	Neur	Autism	SLD	Comm	Em	DD
11. The school explains options for parents when they disagree with the school’s decision.	69.2%	53.3%	73.9%	100%	90%	66.7%
14. All of my concerns and requests were documented on the IEP or in the IEP cover letter.	85.7	75	89.1	100	70	85.7
19. The IEP reflects the TEAM meeting discussion.	92.9	90.5	91.1	100	80	100
20. The IEP tells how progress towards the goals will be measured.	78.6	80	80.4	100	70	100
AVG.	81.6	74.7	83.6	100	77.5	88.1

**IEP: IMPLEMENTATION AND PROGRESS (Questions 21, 22, 28, 29, 30)**

Several questions addressed the implementation of the IEP and parents satisfaction with overall progress of their child. Overall, 8 of 10 parents are satisfied with IEP implementation and the efforts of general and special educators. It should be noted that parents report less satisfaction with their child’s progress at the secondary level than at the elementary level. While there is some variation in satisfaction between levels and different disability groups (e.g. 53.8% of parents of children with neurological disabilities and 88.9% of those with children with communication disabilities are satisfied with general education implementation), overall there is high satisfaction with IEP implementation and the collaborative work that general and special educators do to meet the needs of the students.

**Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Level (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

Statement	District	Elem	MS	HS
21. The school provides the services and supports on the IEP.	78.9%	81.3%	72.2%	78.1%
22. My child is making progress on the goals on the IEP.	78	90.4	68.6	61.3
28. Special education teachers make accommodations and modifications as indicated on the IEP.	91.5	91.7	91.7	89.3
29. General education teachers make accommodations and modifications as indicated on the IEP.	78.1	81.8	79.3	67.9
30. General ed. and special ed. teachers collaborate to insure the IEP is implemented.	83.8	87	85.3	74.1
AVG.	82.1	86.4	79.4	74.1

**Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Disability (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

Statement	Neur	Autism	SLD	Comm	Em	DD
21. The school provides the services and supports on the IEP.	71.4%	71.4%	75.9%	81.8%	88.9%	100%
22. My child is making progress on the goals on the IEP.	75	80	72.2	80	80	100
28. Special education teachers make accommodations and modifications as indicated on the IEP.	91.7	84.2	82.1	88.9	88.9	100
29. General education teachers make accommodations and modifications as indicated on the IEP.	53.8	81.8	76	88.9	77.8	81.8
30. General ed. and special ed. teachers collaborate to insure the IEP is implemented.	81.8	86.7	82	100	77.8	90.9
AVG.	74.8	80.8	77.6	87.9	82.7	94.5

**HOMEWORK AND SUPPORT FOR HOME (Questions 50, 51, 18)**

Homework completion often surfaces as a challenge for parents of students with disabilities. These three questions provide some insight into parent satisfaction with amount of homework (# 50 - 77.4% satisfied), the ability of their child to complete homework independently (# 51 - 53% satisfied) and the helpfulness of school staff around supporting their child at home (# 18 - 69.7% satisfied). However, response differences based on level and disability category indicate further discussion about this area is warranted.

In 2008, question #18 was asked, and the response rate for the district was 81% of parents were satisfied with the help they received from school staff to support their child at home. The decline in this rating from 81% to 69.7% in 2010 warrants further investigation.

**Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Level (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

Statement	District	Elem	MS	HS
50. My child receives an appropriate amount of homework.	77.4%	79.2%	80.6%	70%
51. My child completes homework with minimal assistance.	53	54.2	47.1	57.6
18. School staff help me to support my child at home	69.7	67.3	65.7	76.5
AVG.	66.7	66.9	64.5	68

**Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Disability (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

Statement	Neur	Autism	SLD	Comm	Em	DD
50. My child receives an appropriate amount of homework.	75%	66.7%	86.5%	80%	66.7%	100%
51. My child completes homework with minimal assistance.	61.5	29.4	57.9	80	77.8	55.6
18. School staff help me to support my child at home	53.3	52.4	71.4	81.8	87.5	50
AVG.	63.3	49.5	71.9	80.6	77.3	68.5

**INTERACTIONS WITH TEACHERS (STAFF PROFESSIONALISM) (Questions 23, 24, 25, 26, 47)**

The majority of district parents indicated satisfaction with teacher interactions and understanding of their child. Elementary parents are most satisfied in this category (90.2%) while High School parents (77.4%) and parents of students with emotional disabilities (75.6%) are least satisfied. With the exception of #23 (teachers interact professionally), parent satisfaction trended down as children advanced in level of education. For both “level” and “parents by disability” categories, over 7 in 10 parents indicate satisfaction in this area.

**Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Level (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

Statement	District	Elem	MS	HS
23. Teachers interact with me in a professional manner.	98.5%	98.2%	100%	97.1%
24. Teachers demonstrate that they understand my child.	80.8	87	77.8	68.8
25. Teachers demonstrate their understanding of their role in implementing the IEP.	81.7	88.5	79.4	67.7
26. Teachers show a willingness to learn more about my child.	78.4	84.6	69.4	72.4
47. Therapists demonstrate that they understand my child.	85.9	92.9	88.9	81
AVG.	85.1	90.2	83.1	77.4

**Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Disability (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

Statement	Neur	Autism	SLD	Comm	Em	DD
23. Teachers interact with me in a professional manner.	100%	95.5%	98.2%	100%	100%	100%
24. Teachers demonstrate that they understand my child.	66.7	78.9	81.8	90.9	66.7	100
25. Teachers demonstrate their understanding of their role in implementing the IEP.	76.9	88.2	80	90	66.7	100
26. Teachers show a willingness to learn more about my child.	71.4	73.7	80.8	70	77.8	100
47. Therapists demonstrate that they understand my child.	75	75	96	100	66.6	100
AVG.	78	82.3	87.4	90.2	75.6	100

**TEACHER EXPECTATIONS (Question 27)**

Overall, 89.1% of parents believe that teachers have high expectations for their students. While 78.1% of High School parents expressed agreement with this statement, the lowest satisfaction rating on this item, overall almost 9 in 10 parents are satisfied with teacher expectations.

**Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Level (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

Statement	District	Ele	MS	HS
27. Teachers show they expect my child to achieve.	89.1%	96.2%	88.2%	78.1%

**Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Disability (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

Statement	Neur	Autism	SLD	Comm	Em	DD
27. Teachers show they expect my child to achieve.	78.6%	84.2%	90.7%	90.9%	88.9%	100%

**SOCIAL SKILLS AND BULLYING (Questions 48, 49, 49 A-J)**

Specific questions regarding the general education social skills programming and child-reported incidence of bullying were posed. (The 2009 Needham District Parent Survey also asked questions about Social Skills programming.) The question was worded the same for both the 2009 Parent Survey and this Special Education Parent Survey. Here is the satisfaction rating for the System and the parents of children with IEP's from the 2009 Parent Survey and this 2010 Special Education Parent Survey.

**Percentage of Satisfied Parents (2009 Needham District Parent Survey and 2010 Special Education Parent Survey)**

Statement	District 2009 Parent Survey		2010 Sp. Ed. Parent Survey
	All Parents	Parents of Students with IEP's	District Parents of Students with IEP's
I am satisfied with the social skills program (e.g. PreK-5 Responsive Classroom; 6-8 Advisory; 9-12 Mentor Homeroom)	84.0%	71.6%	67%

Parents were slightly less positive in this survey, with 67% of the district parents indicating satisfaction, down from the 71.6% in the 2009 Survey. This is not a significant difference (5 or more percentage points indicates a significant change in satisfaction). However, the dissatisfaction of the parents of children with Autism and emotional disability (with less than 50% of these parents indicating satisfaction) requires further focus.

**Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Level (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

Statement	District	Ele	MS	HS
48. I am satisfied with the general social skills program in my child’s school [Responsive Classroom, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Step, counselor-led groups, Advisory (6-8), Extended Homeroom (9-12), etc. ]	67%	65.2%	70.9%	92.9%

**Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Disability (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

Statement	Neur	Autism	SLD	Comm	Em	DD
48. I am satisfied with the general social skills program in my child’s school [Responsive Classroom, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Step, counselor-led groups, Advisory (6-8), Extended Homeroom (9-12), etc.]	87.5%	23.5%	82.5%	100%	50%	84.6%

Parents of children on IEP’s have expressed concerns about the incidence of bullying at the schools and this survey asked a question about child-reported incidents and the location of those incidents. Overall, **15.6% of district parents reported their child had reported bullying in school during the last year**, with elementary parents reporting the highest frequency, 26.8%. At least 20% of parents of children with neurological, health, developmental/intellectual and Autism disabilities reported their child had reported a bullying incident to them. All “Yes” responses are tallied below. While these results should be viewed cautiously, since the numbers of parents reporting bullying are relatively small, all responses were included in this report to illustrate parent concerns.

**Parents Responding “Yes” to Child Reporting Bullying Within this School Year**

49. During this school year my child reported being bullied in school. (Definition of bullying: Bullying is aggressive, cruel or threatening behavior that is intentional and carried out repeatedly and over time. It is characterized by an imbalance of power (size, age, social status, ability, popularity). The power may be physical, psychological and/or emotional.		% of Subgroup who responded YES	# of Parents who responded YES
	Elementary	26.8 %	15
Middle School	13.8	5	
High School	2.9	1	
Neurological	20	3	
Autism	22.7	5	
SLD	14.3	8	
Communication	0	0	
Emotional	0	0	
Health	28.6	2	
DD	21.4	3	

Parents were then asked the location of the bullying incident. The locations identified indicate that recess, the lunchroom and the hallway are the most frequent locations of the reported bullying incidents. Locations that were never or almost never identified as the location of the bullying were the specialists’ classroom, the bus, after school activities and the bus stop.

**SATISFACTION WITH THE QUALITY AND AMOUNT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES (Questions 31-45)**

The survey asked parents about their satisfaction with the quality of special education and related services their child received and with the amount of services their child received. Overall, 82.5% of parents are



satisfied with the quality of Specialized Instruction. 86.8% of parents are satisfied with Counseling Services. The following chart compares identical items from the **2008 Special Education Parent Survey with the 2010 survey results.**

**Percentage of Parents, Satisfied with Quality of Services  
(Strongly Agree and Agree)**

Service Area	2008	2010
Specialized Instruction	93.6%	82.5%
Speech and Language	88	86.7
Occupational Therapy	84.7	86.8
Preschool	92.3	100*
Counseling	71.6	86.8

\*Based on 7 parent responses

Satisfaction with most of the services has remained stable for the district as a whole. The satisfaction rating of counseling services has significantly improved since 2008, while satisfaction with specialized instruction has fallen.

The number of responses to each of these “quality” questions varied considerably due to the large number of parents who indicated “Does Not Apply” indicating their child did not receive this service. The threshold for reporting this portion of the survey was a total of 10 responses indicating Strongly/Agree or Strongly/ Disagree. Results are not reported for fewer than 10 responses of this type.

The areas of highest satisfaction for quality of services were Occupational and Speech/Language Therapies and Counseling, with over 8 of 10 parents satisfied. Parents indicated slightly less satisfaction with Adapted Physical Education and Specialized Social Skills instruction, with over 7 of 10 parents indicating satisfaction.

**QUALITY OF SERVICES**

**Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Level (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

I am satisfied with the <b>QUALITY</b> of services my child receives in the following areas:	District	Elem	MS	HS
Specialized Instruction	82.5%	87%	73.3%	80%
Speech/Language	86.7	92.9	61.5	83.3
Physical Therapy	84.6	72.7	***	***
Adapted Physical Education	73.3	72.7	***	***
Occupational Therapy	86.8	92.9	***	***
Counseling	86.8	94.3	76.5	90.9
Specialized Social Skills (lunch groups, social pragmatics groups, etc. )	75	74.1	73.7	88.9
AVG.	82.2	83.6	71.3	85.8

\*\*\* Number of respondents is fewer than 10

**Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Disability (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

I am satisfied with the <b>QUALITY</b> of services my child receives in the following areas:	Neur	Autism	SLD	Comm	Em	DD
Specialized Instruction	72.7%	85%	80.4%	***	77.8%	100%
Speech/Language	***	73.7	91.7	100	***	100
Physical Therapy	***	***	***	***	***	***
Adapted Physical Education	***	***	***	***	***	***
Occupational Therapy	***	75	***	***	***	***
Counseling	***	83.3	100	***	***	***
Specialized Social Skills (lunch groups, social pragmatics groups, etc. )	***	61.5	90.9	***	***	***
AVG.	72.7	75.7	90.8	100	77.8	100

\*\*\*Number of respondents is fewer than 10

## AMOUNT OF SERVICES

### Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Level (Strongly Agree and Agree)

I am satisfied with the <b>AMOUNT</b> of services my child receives in the following areas:	District	Elem	MS	HS
Specialized Instruction	80%	81.8%	80%	75%
Speech/Language	74.7	84.1	53.3	66.7
Physical Therapy	75	***	***	***
Adapted Phys. Ed.	73.3	72.7	***	***
Occ. Therapy	69.8	75	***	***
Counseling	82.5	85.7	73.3	85.7
Specialized Social Skills	63.6	54.8	72.2	69.2
AVG.	74.1	75.7	69.7	74.2

\*\*\*Number of respondents is fewer than 10

### Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Disability (Strongly Agree and Agree)

I am satisfied with the <b>AMOUNT</b> of services my child receives in the following areas:	Neur	Autism	SLD	Comm	Em	DD
Specialized Instruction	***	76.2%	79.6%	***	***	81.8%
Speech/Language	***	59.1	79.2	90	***	91.7
Physical Therapy	***	***	***	***	***	***
Adapted Phys. Ed.	***	***	***	***	***	***
Occ. Therapy	***	92.9	90	***	***	***
Counseling	***	78.6	88.9	***	***	***
Specialized Social Skills	***	38.9	76.2	***	***	***
AVG.	***	69.1	82.8	90	***	86.8

\*\*\*Number of respondents is fewer than 10

### AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING (Question 52)

Available and adequate after-school resources are a concern of parents with children with disabilities. Overall, 71.4% of parents are satisfied with the opportunities available for their children. This satisfaction differs considerably by level, with elementary parents being least satisfied (55.2%). 42% of parents of children with Autism are dissatisfied with after school programs.

### Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Level (Strongly Agree and Agree)

Statement	District	Elem	MS	HS
52. The school ensures that after-school and extra-curricular activities are accessible to students with disabilities	71.4%	55.2%	81.5%	81%

### Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Disability (Strongly Agree and Agree)

Statement	Neur	Autism	SLD	Comm	Em	DD
52. The school ensures that after-school and extra-curricular activities are accessible to students with disabilities	***	58.3%	82.9%	***	***	***

\*\*\* Number of respondents is fewer than 10

## **OVERALL SATISFACTION (Questions 55, 56)**

The final questions in the survey asked about overall satisfaction and happiness of parents and their children. The overall satisfaction rating of 86.3% indicates a high level of satisfaction with special education, with parent satisfaction at 85.5% and parent perceptions of children’s happiness being 87.1%.

### **Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Level (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Elem</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>HS</b>
55. I am happy with the special education services my child receives.	85.5%	87%	82.9%	84.8%
56. Overall, my child is happy at school.	87.1	92.9	85.7	75.8
AVG.	86.3	90	84.3	80.3

### **Percentage of Satisfied Parents, by Disability (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Neur</b>	<b>Autism</b>	<b>SLD</b>	<b>Comm</b>	<b>Em</b>	<b>DD</b>
55. I am happy with the special education services my child receives.	84.6%	76.2%	87.3%	90.9%	70%	100%
56. Overall, my child is happy at school.	71.4	90.5	90.7	90.9	***	100
AVG.	78	83.5	89	90.9	***	100

\*\*\*Number of respondents is fewer than 10

## **SUMMARY OF SURVEY OPEN RESPONSES**

Two open-ended questions were posed in the survey:

1. Please list any suggestion for improving home-school communication; and
2. Please provide any other information you think might be helpful in improving special education services.

### **Parents suggested the following improvements to benefit the home-school communication:**

- Provide more frequent school-home communication, both formal and informal, particularly when the child has a primary communication disorder, such as the child with autism.
- Parents are concerned that the school does not value their input or participation. One parent said, “Please listen to parents of these children. We know them best and the school can learn a lot on how to circumvent emotional issues as they arise.”
- Several parents suggested that communication with the school could focus more on helping them at home with homework problems, behavior issues and generalizing school-learned skills.
- At the secondary level, several parents commented that PowerSchool grades and comments had “replaced parent teacher communication” and that this was not an effective method of receiving information about their student’s progress.

### **Parents made the following suggestions to improve special education services:**

- The district needs to make more of a commitment to disability awareness. “Children in the mainstream need to be provided with an opportunity to understand why some of the children in class behave and learn differently.”
- The division of the Early Learning Center programs, between Newman and Hillside Schools elicited several parent responses regarding the disruptive effect of the move at grade 3 to both students and families. A parent commented, “If you talk about inclusion and then have select programs in only one of five schools, that’s not inclusion.”
- Improve the communication between general and special education, so that the general educators are familiar with and understand the IEP.
- Make sure that the instructional methodologies are current and research-based.

### **While the comment section posed questions to elicit parent suggestions, some respondents made positive comments about their experience in the school district, including these comments from middle school parents:**

- Several parents praised the relationship they have with their student’s special education liaison saying it is “a model of success”.
- Another parent praised the responsiveness of the special educator

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) and the Department of Student Development developed and administered an extensive survey for parents of students with IEP's in April 2010. 135 parents returned surveys, representing 18.8% of students with IEP's in the district. Due to this low return rate, the results must be viewed with caution. Some groups of parents were under-represented (e.g., high school parents and parents of out of district students) while other groups were over-represented (e.g., parents of students with neurological, autism and emotional disabilities and parents of elementary students) in comparison with their actual representation in the district. Nevertheless, the responses of all groups of parents are reported in this Parent Survey Report, except for those where the response rate was fewer than 10 parents.

The survey was divided into 13 categories. The following is a brief summary and, where indicated, recommendation(s) for further actions in each category.

### **1. Parent-School Partnership**

**83.9% of the responding parents are satisfied with the home-school partnership. This overall positive response is similar across all levels of the district.**

The responses from parents, disaggregated by disability, shows that overall parent satisfaction ranges from 73.3% (parents of students with autism) to 90.7% (parents of students with developmental disability). For the question regarding "the district asks for my input to evaluate the programming for my child" only 35% of parents of students with autism were satisfied.

#### **Recommendation:**

- 1. A Parent Satisfaction Survey will be sent after Annual Review and Evaluation Team Meetings to provide parent feedback regarding team process and program input.**

### **2. Staff Accessibility**

**Most parents in the district, 85.5%, are satisfied with staff accessibility and communication. Well over 9 in 10 parents rate school personnel as respectful.**

Significantly lower in this category was the satisfaction level of parents of students with autism, specific learning disabilities and parents of elementary students. This dissatisfaction was seen in their scores pertaining to frequent, effective communication regarding progress. It is important to note that the elementary schools provide two progress reports per year for each student, and the IEP progress report is issued at the same time. At both the Middle and High School levels, IEP progress reports are issued 3 (Middle School) or 4 (High School) times per year. Parent comments also mentioned dissatisfaction with level of communication and the frequency of reporting on progress.

### **3. Learning About Disabilities**

The question regarding the schools "offering opportunities for students and families to learn about disabilities" scored the lowest of any category on the survey. **Only 54% of district parents are satisfied with these opportunities, and only 36% of Middle School parents are satisfied.**

During the 2009-2010 school year the elementary Disability Awareness program was expanded through collaborative efforts of parents, the Elementary Special Education Director and elementary Principals. Further work will be occurring in 2010-2011 to expand this work at the elementary level.

**Recommendations:**

- 1. Parents, Principals and the Elementary Special Education Director will collaborate to establish Disability Awareness programs at the elementary level.**
- 2. The Middle School Special Education Director will further explore the middle school parent concerns regarding disability awareness, in SY 2010-11, in conjunction with the guidance department.**

**4. IEP Process: Student Evaluations**

**82.4% of parents in the district are satisfied with the evaluations completed by the district. This satisfaction is similar across all levels.**

When disaggregated by disability, some parents are less satisfied: 7 of 10 parents of students with autism and emotional disabilities are satisfied with the student evaluations provided by the district. Other parents are more satisfied: nearly 100% of parents of students with communication and developmental disabilities are satisfied with the evaluation process.

**5. IEP: Team Process**

**83.4% of district parents are satisfied with the Team Process.** This satisfaction is apparent in parents at all three levels of the district.

In response to whether “the school explains options for parents when they disagree with the school’s decision,” 72.5% of district parents were satisfied. When disaggregated by disability, parents of students with autism, developmental and neurological disabilities were less satisfied, ranging from 53% (autism) to 69% (neurological).

**Recommendations:**

- 1. Professional Development for special education staff regarding TEAM process will be provided during school year 2010-11.**
- 2. The Special Education Directors will offer a Parent Education Workshop regarding TEAM process and parent rights.**

**6. IEP: Implementation and Progress**

Overall, over **8 of 10 parents are satisfied that the school implements their child’s IEP and that the child is making progress.** While there is some variation between disability groups and levels in the district the results in this category indicate high parent satisfaction with IEP implementation.

**7. Homework and Support for Home**

These questions provide some insight into parent **satisfaction with amount of homework (77.4% satisfied)**, the ability of their child to **complete homework independently (53% satisfied)** and the helpfulness of school **staff around supporting their child at home (69.7% satisfied).**

The parent satisfaction across levels and disability groups varies widely. Parents of students with neurological, autism and developmental disabilities are least satisfied with help they receive from school staff to support their child at home. The amount of assistance some groups of children require in order to complete their homework is apparent in the parent responses, too. Parent response to “My child

completes homework with minimal assistance” ranges from 29% (autism) to 80% (communication). 47% of Middle School parents indicated this is true. The district needs to address this concern by

determining parent need, assessing homework expectations and by providing support for parents who are in need.

## **8. Interactions with Teachers (Staff Professionalism)**

**85.1% of parents in the district are satisfied with their interactions with teachers and therapists.**

Over 7 of 10 parents, by level and by disability, indicate satisfaction with teacher interactions. The parents of students with emotional and neurological disabilities were least satisfied with teachers demonstrating that they understand their child and their role in implementing the IEP.

## **9. Teacher Expectations**

**89% of parents in the district are satisfied that teachers show they expect their child to achieve.** The range of satisfaction on this question is from 78% (HS parents and those with children with neurological disability) to 100% (parents of students with developmental disabilities).

## **10. Social Skills and Bullying**

**67% of district parents indicated satisfaction with the general social skills programming in the schools. This is compared to the data from the December 2009 Parent Survey when 71.6% of parents of students with IEP’s indicated satisfaction and 84% of all parents in the district indicated satisfaction. Overall, parents are less satisfied with social skills programming within the general education program than they are with social skills programming that is specific to their child with a disability.**

The percentage of parents of students with autism (23.5%) and emotional disability (50%) who are satisfied with general social skills programming is significantly lower than the district average (67%). It may be useful to compare parents’ satisfaction with general education social skills programs and the special education social skills programs that their child may receive based on an IEP.

**Percentage of Satisfied Parents (Strongly Agree and Agree)**

<b>Parents by Level And/or Disability</b>	<b>Satisfaction with General Education Social Skills Programming</b>	<b>Satisfaction with Specialized Social Skills Programming</b>
District	67%	75%
Elem.	65.2	74.1
MS	70.9	73.7
HS	92.9	88.9
Autism	23.5	61.5
SLD	82.5	90.9
Emotional	50	***

Overall, parents who are not satisfied with the general education social skills programs indicated more satisfaction with the special education social skills instruction that their children are receiving.

**21 of 135 responding parents indicated that their child reported bullying within this school year.** This is equivalent to 15.6% of respondents. Responses to location indicated that less supervised areas such as recess, the lunchroom and the hallway are the most frequently sited locations for the reported incidents.

**Recommendations:**

- 1. Elementary teachers will receive training and support for implementation of 2<sup>nd</sup> Step Social Skills curriculum in fall, 2010.**
- 2. The Special Education Directors and the Autism Specialist will evaluate current social skills programming for the students with autism, in both specialized and non-specialized programs.**
- 3. Professional Development will be provided in Social Thinking Curriculum, a program developed by Michelle Garcia-Winner, for district staff in October, 2010.**

## **11. Satisfaction with the Quality and Amount of Special Education Services**

**Compared with the 2008 Special Education Parent Survey, parents are equally or more satisfied with therapist services, counseling and preschool. Specialized instruction, which is usually provided in the classroom or in the Learning Center, showed a decline in satisfaction, from 93.6% to 82.5%.**

**In terms of quality of all services, 82.2% of the district parents are satisfied with the quality of special education services.**

**75% of parents were satisfied with specialized Social Skills' instruction (compared to 67% with general ed. social skills), and 62% of parents of children with autism are satisfied with the specialized Social Skills' instruction (compared with 24% satisfaction with general ed. social skills).** The level of satisfaction with the amount of services provided is at 77% for all parents who responded. Most notable is the satisfaction with the amount of Counseling services (83% overall). In contrast, only 39% of parents of students with autism indicated satisfaction with the amount of specialized Social Skills' instruction.

**Recommendation:**

- 1. Through the Special Education Program Evaluation that will occur in the second half of this school year, curriculum, instruction and student progress will be analyzed to determine any changes to our current practices that may result in more effective student progress**

## **12. After-School Programming**

**7 of 10 parents who responded to the survey are satisfied that after-school and extra-curricular activities are accessible to students with disabilities.** However, elementary parents were significantly less satisfied than MS and HS parents, with only 55% satisfaction (compared to 81% for MS and HS). 58% of parents of children with autism are satisfied with the accessibility of after-school programming. This is an area for further exploration.

**Recommendation:**

- 1. The Elementary Special Education Director, Community Education staff and parents will meet to discuss after-school programming options for students with disabilities.**

### **13. Overall Satisfaction**

Overall, 86% of parents indicated that they are happy with the special education services their child receives, and 87% report that their child is happy at school. Although over 7 in 10 parents of High School students perceive their child as happy at school, parents' perceptions of their child's happiness in school reflects decreased happiness as children age through the school system. When disaggregated by disability, parent responses were positive, with satisfaction ratings ranging from 70% to 100% for parent happiness and child happiness.

#### **NEXT STEPS:**

1. Invite parents to meet with the Special Education Directors, by level, to discuss those areas of the survey that reflected low parent satisfaction.
2. Invite parents to meet, by disability, to discuss those areas of the survey that reflected low parent satisfaction.
3. Complete in-depth surveys and/or interviews with teaching staff regarding their perceptions of special education programming in the district.

Reported by:

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9/27/10