

Lexington Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) and
Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA)
www.lexsepta.org

LEXINGTON SEPAC/SEPTA
FALL 2019 PARENT SURVEY
REPORT

May 12, 2020

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INTRODUCTION

About the Lexington SEPAC/SEPTA

The Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) is a mandated organization under the current Massachusetts Special Education Regulations (see 603 CMR 28.07 (4)), meaning all school districts are required by law to have a parent advisory council. The SEPAC is tasked with *“advising the district on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities; meeting regularly with school officials to participate in the planning, development, and evaluation of the school district’s special education programs.”*

The Lexington Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA) was developed in 2012 by the Lexington SEPAC executive committee. This organization gives the SEPAC a 501(C) 3 status, and offers parents a way of connecting with one another, provides valuable speaker events and workshops, and gives the PAC a seat at the PTA table.

This survey was conducted as a web-based poll. We believe the results to be a meaningful, if unscientific, representation of the views of Lexington parents of special education students. The response data in the survey do not reflect or constitute the opinions, endorsement, or position of either the Lexington SEPAC/SEPTA or the Lexington Public Schools. The opinions and responses presented are solely those of the survey respondents. Because the data constitute opinions, different interpretations are possible. The Lexington SEPAC/SEPTA does not assume responsibility for the readers’ interpretation of or reaction to the survey or this report.

INTRODUCTION

Background

The November 2019 SEPAC Parent Survey was launched as a result of discussion over the course of 2019 with SEPAC, the LPS administration, and the School Committee. The last parent survey was completed in November 2012, and given the District's vision for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, the recommendation to repeat an anonymous parent survey was agreed in the May 10, 2019 LexSEPAC business meeting. The Co-Chairs received approval to move ahead with the survey by Dr. Hackett in the Quarterly SEPAC/LPS meeting on May 22, 2019.

The Lexington SEPAC/SEPTA, in partnership with the Lexington Public Schools and the School Committee, began work on the survey in August 2019. Target respondents included parents of children with an IEP or 504 Plan currently in Lexington Public Schools. The survey sought to better understand parent satisfaction with:

- Special Education/504 placement and service delivery
- Parent partnership efforts
- Communication

The goal of the survey results was to help advise the Lexington Public Schools on special education services and resource planning, and to better focus SEPAC/SEPTA efforts, with the hope that the insights provided in the report will be useful as the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work continues.

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Methodology

The SEPAC/SEPTA worked with the School Committee and Lexington Public Schools on the best way to conduct the 2019 survey, and decided to follow a similar methodology as was used for the 2012 Parent Survey, with Lexington SEPAC/SEPTA maintaining responsibility for survey creation, survey launch, data compilation and analysis, and survey results report and presentation.

The Lexington SEPAC/SEPTA collaborated with LPS administration and School Committee to review and modify questions, with the goal of providing comparability with the 2012 survey results. Therefore, most of the questions and format of the survey mirrors that of 2012 with three key exceptions. First, as discipline disparity has become a focus area for Lexington Public Schools, the survey includes more demographic data to provide more insight into the special education experience of minority groups and at-risk populations. Second, the 2012 survey had large sections on behavioral management that were specific to that time period and no longer relevant and were therefore removed. Third, questions specifically pertaining to general education staff were added based on qualitative feedback SEPAC has collected over the past two years. After a survey draft was created, the Survey Team incorporated feedback and got approval on the survey format from:

- Dr. Julie Hackett (LPS Superintendent)
- Ellen Sugita (LPS Director of Special Education)
- Val Viscosi (LPS Director of Guidance Services)
- Johnny Cole (LPS Director of Equity & Student Supports)
- Maureen Kavanaugh (LPS Director of Planning & Assessment)
- Kathryn Colburn (SEPAC/SEPTA School Committee Liaison)
- Scott Bokun (SEPAC/SEPTA School Committee Liaison)

The Lexington SEPAC/SEPTA also discussed a response rate target that would render the survey responses meaningful in the eyes of the district, coming to an agreement that a 30% threshold would be needed to be able to draw meaningful conclusions from the survey.

The Lexington SEPAC/SEPTA launched the online survey on October 15, 2019. The survey was closed on November 15, 2019. Prospective respondents were notified of the survey via the LPS

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email system (which goes to all parent with children in LPS), various Lexington listserv email lists, the SEPAC website, the PTA newsletters, and other social media platforms.

The survey was launched online via SurveyMonkey. Respondents were not asked to identify themselves to access the survey, but were asked to provide demographic information to help provide meaningful context. Within the rules of the survey, only one parent per household could submit a response, per student currently on an IEP or 504 plan.

After the demographic data section, respondents were asked to rate a series of statements on a Likert scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree. Depending on the statement, we also included N/A options.

At the end of each set of statements, respondents were given the option to provide additional comments. We also included three open-ended questions at the end of the survey for additional feedback.

The Survey Team committed to keeping all responses, including comments, anonymous. Nowhere in the reporting of results are comments tied to individual responses, and the Survey Team was committed to not using any demographic data that would allow us to identify parents or students. In addition, the Survey Team edited comments to remove any references to specific individuals or schools as well as to remove any content that the Survey Team felt could be used to identify an individual. While best efforts were made to maintain the point and relevance of edited comments, the Survey Team's priority was respondent anonymity. That being said, the Survey Team cannot guarantee that no individual will be identifiable based on their responses to the survey.

While this approach did help maintain respondent anonymity, one drawback was that we were not able to identify strengths and weaknesses at specific schools or programs with these survey results. A possible next step would be to work with Lexington Public Schools to do additional investigations to target improvement efforts.

SURVEY RESULTS

Survey Response Rates

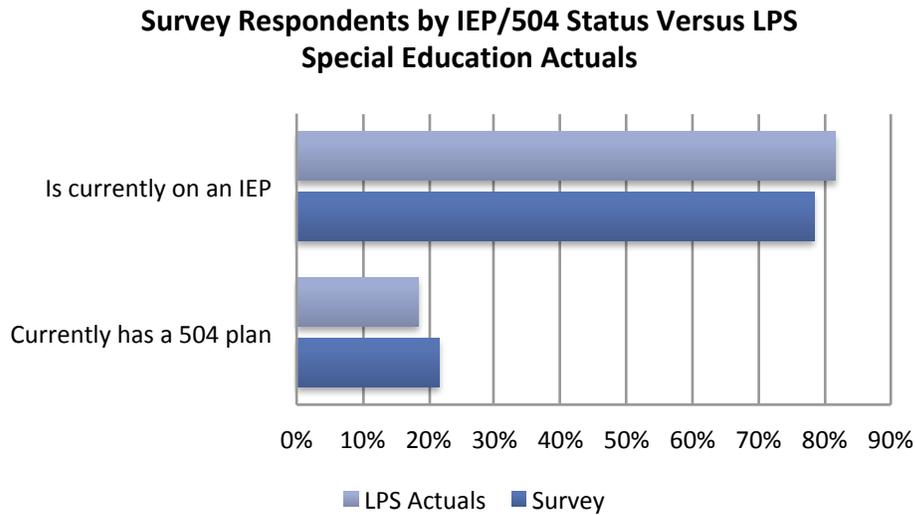
A total of 507 parents responded to the survey. As of November 2019, LPS had 1,286 students on IEPs and/or 504 Plans, resulting in a 39% response rate, which surpassed the 30% threshold agreed upon prior to the survey's release. Responses varied by question, but in all quantitative questions we achieved a response rate above the 30% requirement. Questions 10, 11, and 12 were open-ended questions for optional written feedback. We therefore view the survey results as meaningful and representative of the opinions of the Special Education population in Lexington.

QUESTION	RESPONSES	RESPONSE RATE
Question 1 (grade):	507	39%
Question 2 (race):	501	39%
Question 3 (gender):	499	39%
Question 4 (location):	490	38%
Question 5 (IEP/504):	482	37%
Question 6 (IEP):	384	37%
Question 7 (504):	106	45%
Question 8 (Outside experts):	410	32%
Question 9 (Communication):	395	31%
Question 10 (Most effective):	193	15%
Question 11 (Changes):	193	15%
Question 12 (Open comments):	117	9%

Based on the numbers provided by Lexington Public Schools, there are 1,049 students on an IEP plan. With 384 respondents identifying themselves as parents of children currently on an IEP, we determined a response rate of 37% for this category. In addition, based on numbers provided by Lexington Public Schools, there are 237 students on 504 Plans. With 106 respondents identifying themselves as parents of students on a 504 Plan, we determined a 45% response rate for this category of respondents.

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Graph 2: Respondents by IEP/504 Plan Status



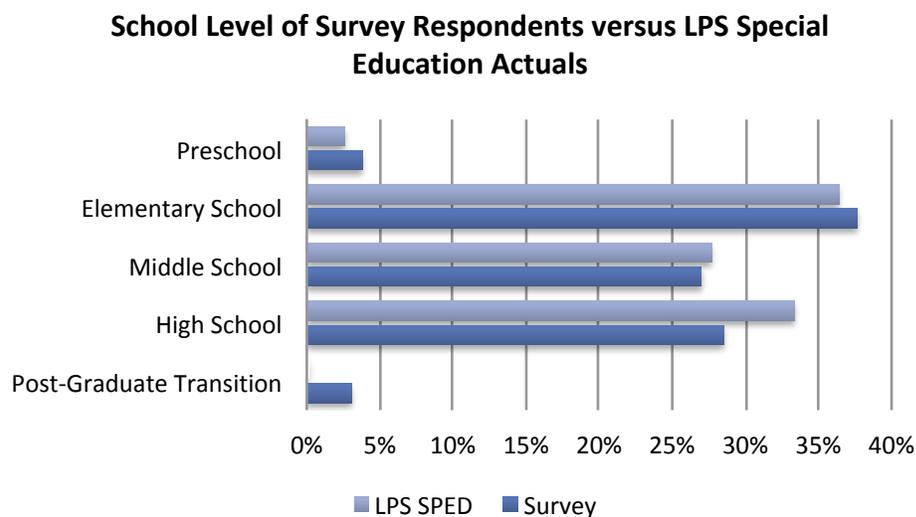
The survey sample compares favorably to the Lexington Public Schools Special Education IEP/504 composition. 78% (384) of respondents had children with an IEP plan, compared to 82% of LPS Special Education students, and 22% (106) of survey respondents had a child on a 504 Plan versus 18% in the LPS Special Education population.

SURVEY RESULTS

Demographics

The survey asked four questions related to demographics. While we had 507 survey responses overall, multiple responses could be checked for demographic data (i.e. a respondent could identify their child as both Hispanic and African American). Therefore, the raw data counts by question may vary. Overall, the survey sample did not differ materially from the Lexington Public Schools Special Education population overall, suggesting that the survey sample is representative of the overall Special Education population within Lexington.

Graph 3: Respondents by School Level versus LPS Special Education Actuals



The survey asked respondents to identify themselves by school level (we did not ask for specific school because that may have compromised anonymity). The majority of respondents identified themselves as parents of children in elementary school (38%, or 198 responses), while the numbers were fairly similar for middle school (27%, 142) and high school (29%, 150). Parents of pre-school aged children represented 4% (20) of responses and parents of children in post-graduate transition represented 3% (16) of respondents.

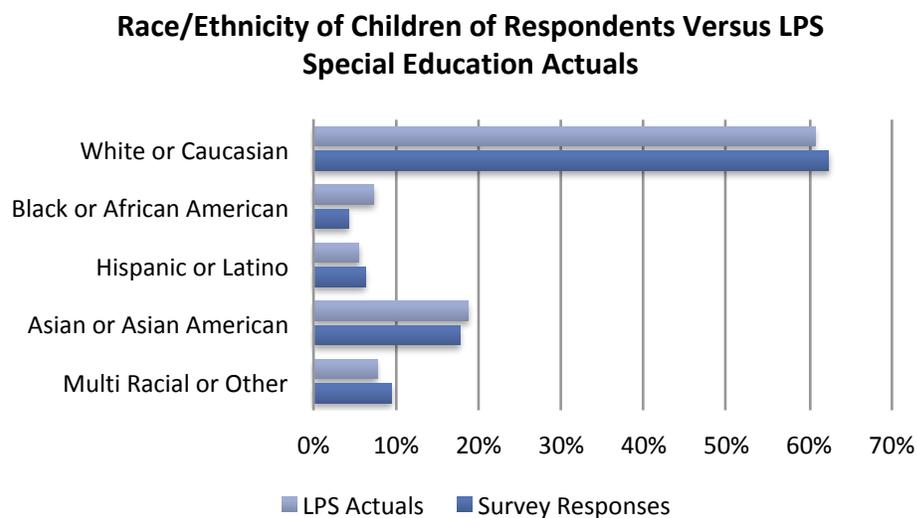
The survey response rates compare favorably to the actual breakdown of students in special education by school level, based on numbers provided by Lexington Public Schools. The

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breakdown of school level within the survey were all within four percentage points of the Lexington Public Schools actuals for students with IEP/504 Plans. Based on these numbers, our response rates for students with an IEP or 504 Plan are at least 35% for all school levels, as shown in the table below:

School level	Response Rate
Preschool	61%
Elementary	42%
Middle School	40%
High School	35%

Graph 4: Respondents by Race/Ethnicity

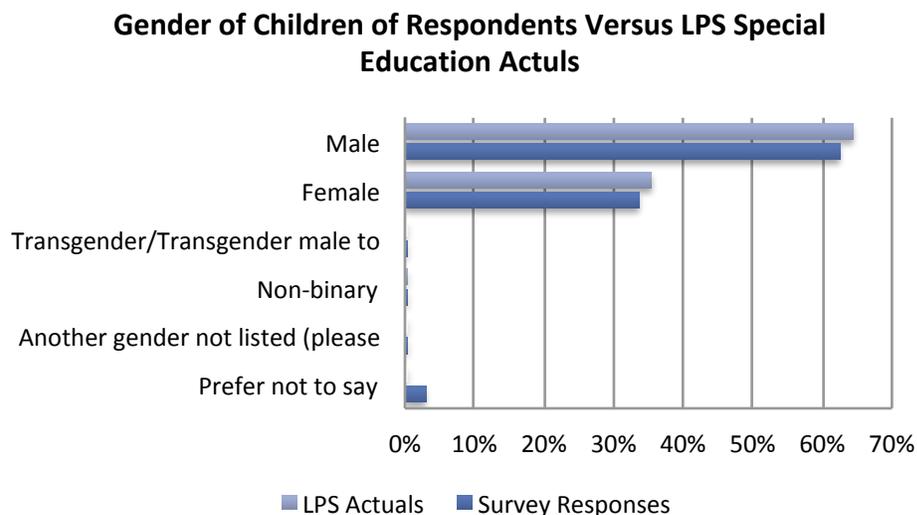


The survey also asked respondents to describe their race/ethnicity. As mentioned above, we allowed multiple responses to this question, resulting in a larger response count than other questions. 62% (338) of respondents described their race/ethnicity as Caucasian. The next largest demographic group was Asian or Asian American, at 18% (96) of respondents. 6% (34) of respondents identified as Hispanic or Latino, and 4% (23) of respondents described their children as African American or Black. 6% (35) of respondents preferred not to report a race/ethnicity.

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The racial/ethnic makeup of the survey also tracked very closely to the makeup of LPS’s Special Education racial/ethnic configuration, with survey response rates tracking within three percentage points of LPS Special Education actuals.

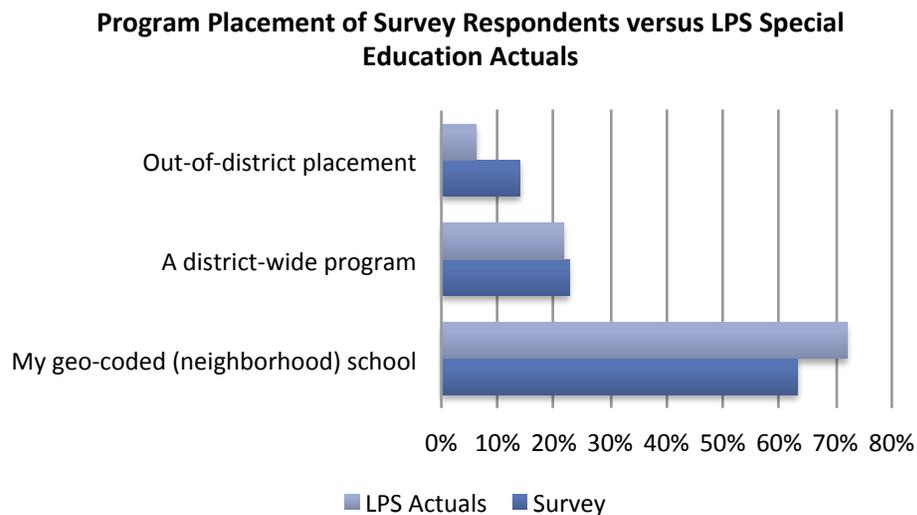
Graph 5: Respondents by Gender



We next asked respondents to describe their child’s gender. 63% (312) of respondents identified their child as male and 34% (168) identified their child as female. A handful of respondents identified their child as transgender, non-binary, or other. 3% (15) of respondents preferred not to describe their child’s gender. Here as well, the survey was representative of the larger LPS Special Education population, with survey respondent rates being within one percentage point of the LPS actuals.

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Graph 6: Respondents by Program Placement versus LPS Special Education Actuals



Finally, we asked respondents to provide information about what type of program their child attended. The majority of parents (63%, 320) told us their child attended their geo-coded (or neighborhood) school, with 23% (115) of respondents saying their child attended a district-wide program (district-wide programs are programs that may group children by disability or need, such as the Intensive Learning Program at Hastings, Fiske, Clarke, and LHS and the Developmental Learning Program at Harrington and Clarke). Please note that some parents may be in both their neighborhood school and a district-wide program if their home happens to be in the same geographic location as the district-wide program that is best suited to their child’s needs.

We also asked parents to tell us if their child attended an out-of-district school, and to indicate the type of out-of-district program. Overall, 14% (71) of respondents indicated that their child attended an out-of-district school, with 10% receiving at least partial funding from LPS and 4% funding education independently.

The distribution of survey respondents was not meaningfully different than the actual makeup of the LPS Special Education student body based on numbers provided from LPS as of November 2019, with all categories falling within ten percentage points of the LPS Special Education actuals. The percentage of survey respondents in district-wide program mirrored

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the total LPS population (23% versus 22%). The survey slightly underrepresented students with IEPs/504 Plans located in their geo-coded school (63% versus 72%) and slightly overrepresented out-of-district students (14% versus 6%).

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Parent Comments

Along with the 507 quantitative responses, we received 821 parent comments (comments were optional) from over 260 different parents. We were impressed by the time many parents took to provide additional detail and feedback about their own experiences and the experiences of their children, both positive and negative. We have included comments (with identifying information removed as necessary to protect parent, student, and staff anonymity) throughout the report where we felt a comment was indicative of a common theme and/or where a comment added detail to the quantitative results.

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Raw Data

You will find a copy of this report on the Lexington SEPAC website (www.lexsepta.org). We have also created a document that compiles all the comments submitted by respondents (edited to protect parent, student, and staff anonymity) in a document called Lexington SEPAC/SEPTA November 2019 Parent Survey Comments. This document has also been posted on the Lexington SEPAC/SEPTA website (www.lexsepta.org).

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Placement and Service Delivery for Children on an IEP (Question 6)

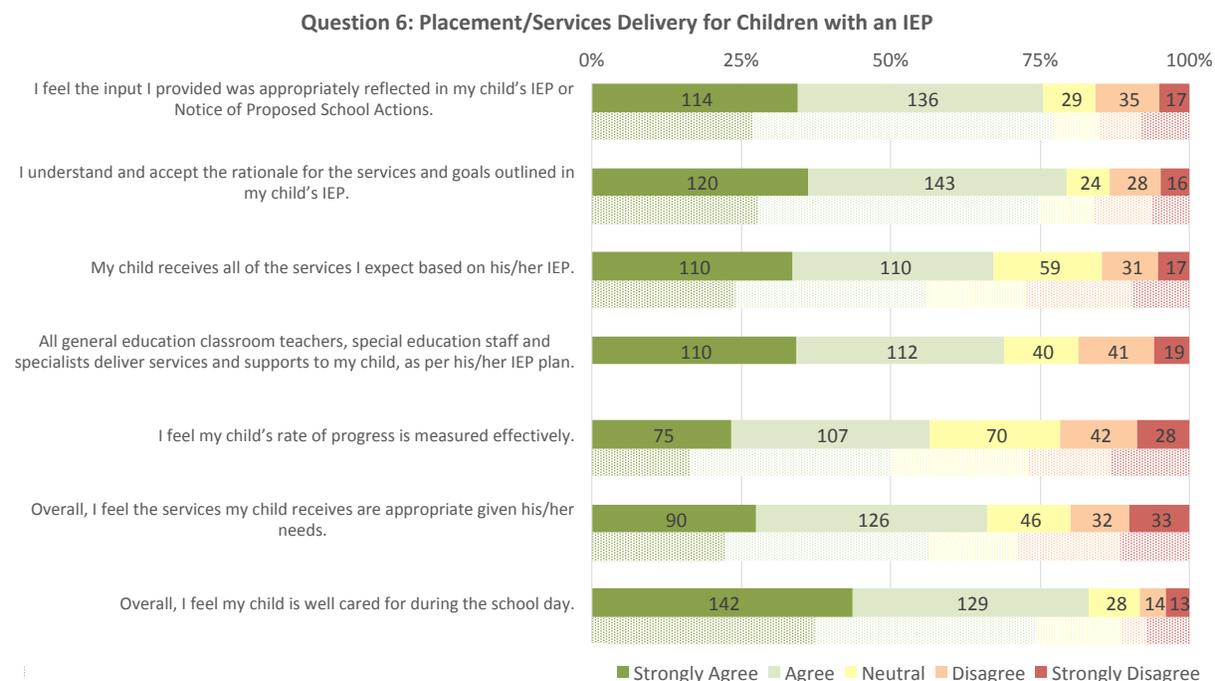
QUANTITATIVE RESULTS—ALL SCHOOL LEVELS

The first set of statements focused on parent satisfaction with the placement, services, and goals for children on IEPs, including if all school personnel (general education, special education, and specialists) deliver the appropriate services, if progress is measured effectively, and if children are well cared for during the school day. Six of the seven statements in this question were asked in the 2012 SEPAC Parent Survey, so we are able to examine responses across time.

There are two types of charts used throughout this report. The first shows the summary results from the 2019 and 2012 surveys. Within the charts, the top line of each question represents the 2019 results and the shaded line below represents the 2012 survey results. The bars represent the percentage for each response category, with the absolute number of responses for 2019 listed within the bar. The second chart used throughout the report shows positive versus negative response rates. Positive response rates are defined as the percentage of respondents who Agreed or Strongly Agreed with the corresponding question, while the negative response rate is the percentage of respondents who answered that they Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed. Neutral responses were not included in either the Positive or Negative Response Rates, therefore Positive plus Negative responses may not equal 100%.

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Graph 7: Placement/Services Delivery for Children with an IEP



Graph 8: Placement/Services Delivery for Children with an IEP Positive Versus Negative Response Rates

	Negative Response			Positive Response		
	2019	2012	Change	2019	2012	Change
I feel the input I provided was appropriately reflected in my child's IEP or Notice of Proposed School Actions.	16%	15%	1%	76%	77%	-2%
I understand and accept the rationale for the services and goals outlined in my child's IEP.	13%	16%	-3%	79%	75%	5%
My child receives all of the services I expect based on his/her IEP.	15%	27%	-13%	67%	56%	11%
All general education classroom teachers, special education staff and specialists deliver services and supports to my child, as per his/her IEP plan.	19%			69%		
I feel my child's rate of progress is measured effectively.	22%	27%	-5%	57%	50%	6%
Overall, I feel the services my child receives are appropriate given his/her needs.	20%	29%	-9%	66%	56%	10%
Overall, I feel my child is well cared for during the school day.	8%	11%	-3%	83%	74%	9%

This section saw some of the most positive results of the survey. 76% (250) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that their input is reflected in their child's IEP. In addition, 79% (263) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they understand the rationale for the services and goals outlined in their child's IEP. These results compare well to the 2012 survey results, which had positive responses of 77% and 75%, respectively. These results indicate

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that the majority of parents are satisfied that they can provide their own ideas when their child's IEP is created, and understand and agree with the services and programs included in the IEP.

In addition, 83% (271) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that their child was well cared for during the day, indicating strong levels of parent satisfaction with the overall care and safety of their children. The 2019 results on this question showed an improvement from the 2012 Survey results, increasing to an 83% positive response rate versus 74% in 2012.

Responses to other questions about implementation and monitoring, while still mainly positive and improving from 2012, were more mixed. With regards to service delivery, only two-thirds (67%, 220) of parents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that their children received all the services on their IEP, and 15% (48) Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed. While both of these metrics showed meaningful improvement from 2012 (56% positive response, 27% negative response), the absolute number is still below the other positive response rates. We saw a similar rate of positive response (69%, 222) on whether parents believed the staff (general education teachers, special education staff, and specialists) adhered to the IEP. 19% (60) of respondents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed that general education staff, special education staff, and specialists deliver the IEP-mandated services and supports. Similarly, while 66% (216) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the services their child received were appropriate given their child's needs, 20% (65) Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed. Together, these findings suggest that parents may be more satisfied with IEP creation, but less satisfied with IEP execution.

The other area discussed in this section was parent perspectives regarding rate of progress monitoring. Here we saw the lowest rating of the question set. Only 57% (182) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that their child's progress was measured effectively and 22% (70) Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed. This question also had one of the largest Neutral responses in the survey at 22% (70).

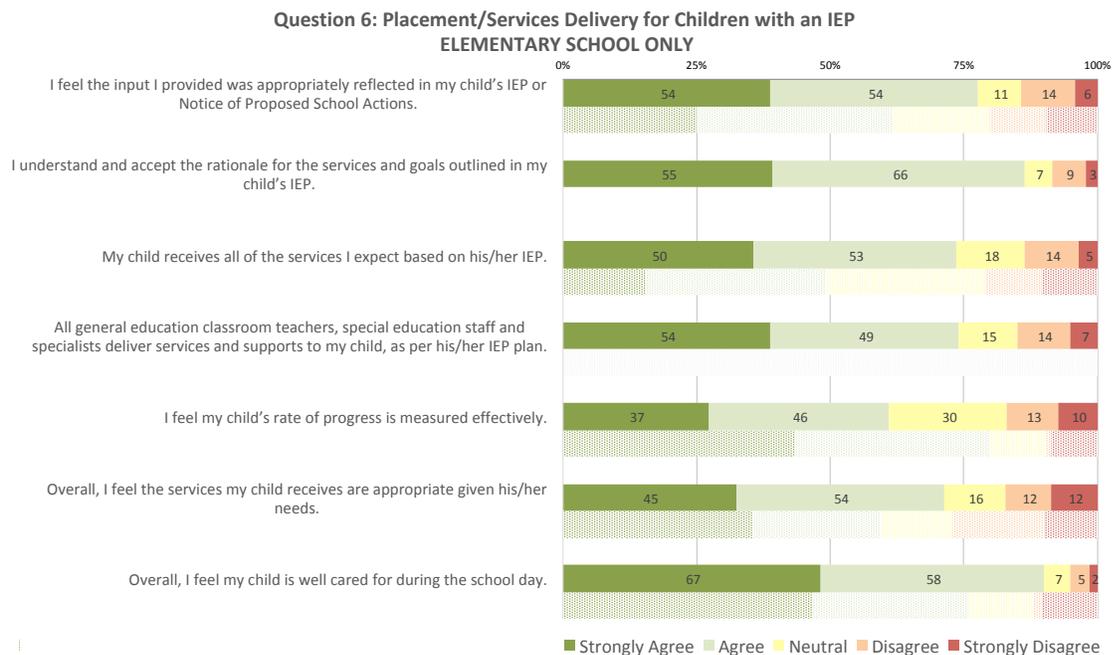
Taken together, the quantitative results for the Placement/Services Delivery for Children with an IEP indicate that parents have particular concerns around staff adhering to the IEP, delivering the appropriate services, and whether their child's progress is adequately monitored to ensure future success.

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QUANTITATIVE RESULTS BY SCHOOL LEVEL

Wherever reasonable, we are providing two additional sub-analyses—by school level (Elementary, Middle, High School), and by Program Placement (geo-coded school or district-wide program).

Graph 9: Placement/Services Delivery for Elementary School Children with an IEP



Graph 10: Placement/Services Delivery for Elementary School Children with an IEP Positive Versus Negative Response Rates

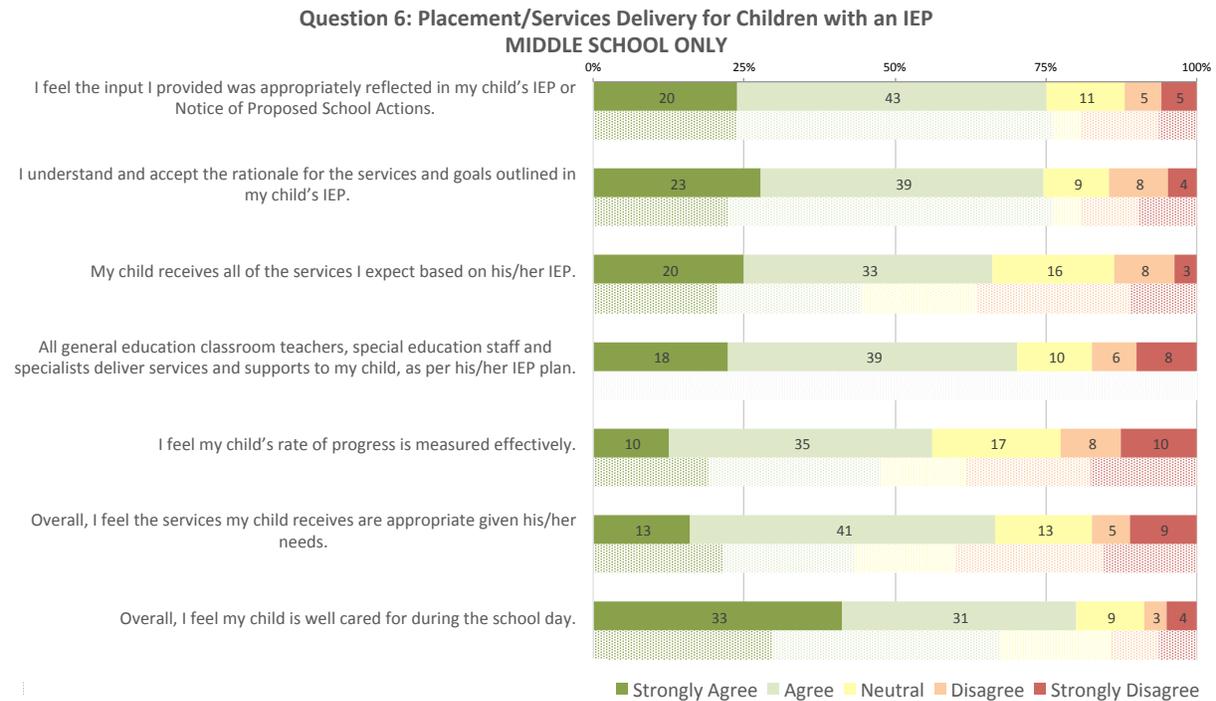
	Negative Response			Positive Response		
	2019	2012	Change	2019	2012	Change
I feel the input I provided was appropriately reflected in my child's IEP or Notice of Proposed School Actions.	14%	12%	3%	78%	81%	-3%
I understand and accept the rationale for the services and goals outlined in my child's IEP.	9%	12%	-3%	86%	76%	11%
My child receives all of the services I expect based on his/her IEP.	14%	20%	-7%	74%	62%	12%
All general education classroom teachers, special education staff and specialists deliver services and supports to my child, as per his/her IEP plan.	15%			74%		
I feel my child's rate of progress is measured effectively.	17%	21%	-4%	61%	49%	12%
Overall, I feel the services my child receives are appropriate given his/her needs.	17%	20%	-3%	71%	64%	7%
Overall, I feel my child is well cared for during the school day.	5%	10%	-5%	90%	80%	10%

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In looking at the Placement and Services Delivery for Children on an IEP results by school level, the common theme is that satisfaction rates are highest at the elementary school level. The number of respondents with elementary-aged children ranged from 136 to 140, depending on the statement. Parents of elementary-aged children gave positive response rates (Agree or Strongly Agree) above 70% for almost all questions in this category, and the negative results (Disagree or Strongly Disagree) were all below 18%. The notable exception was whether their child's rate of progress is being measured effectively, where only 61% (83) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed. Also of note, while feedback to the first statement, "I feel the input I provided was appropriately reflected in my child's IEP or Notice of Proposed School Actions" was quite positive, with 78% (108) of respondents Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing and 14% (20) of respondents Disagreeing or Strongly Disagreeing, both of these results worsened from 2012 (81%, 12%, respectively).

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Graph 11: Placement/Services Delivery for Middle School Children with an IEP



Graph 12: Placement/Services Delivery for Middle School Children with an IEP Positive Versus Negative Response Rates

	Negative Response			Positive Response		
	2019	2012	Change	2019	2012	Change
I feel the input I provided was appropriately reflected in my child's IEP or Notice of Proposed School Actions.	12%	19%	-7%	75%	76%	-1%
I understand and accept the rationale for the services and goals outlined in my child's IEP.	14%	19%	-5%	75%	76%	-1%
My child receives all of the services I expect based on his/her IEP.	14%	37%	-23%	66%	44%	22%
All general education classroom teachers, special education staff and specialists deliver services and supports to my child, as per his/her IEP plan.	17%			70%		
I feel my child's rate of progress is measured effectively.	23%	38%	-16%	56%	48%	9%
Overall, I feel the services my child receives are appropriate given his/her needs.	17%	40%	-23%	67%	43%	24%
Overall, I feel my child is well cared for during the school day.	9%	14%	-5%	80%	67%	13%

The number of respondents with children on IEPs in middle school ranged from 80 to 84, depending on the category. The middle school results were also quite strong and mirrored the elementary school results in most ways, with positive responses (Agree or Strongly Agree)

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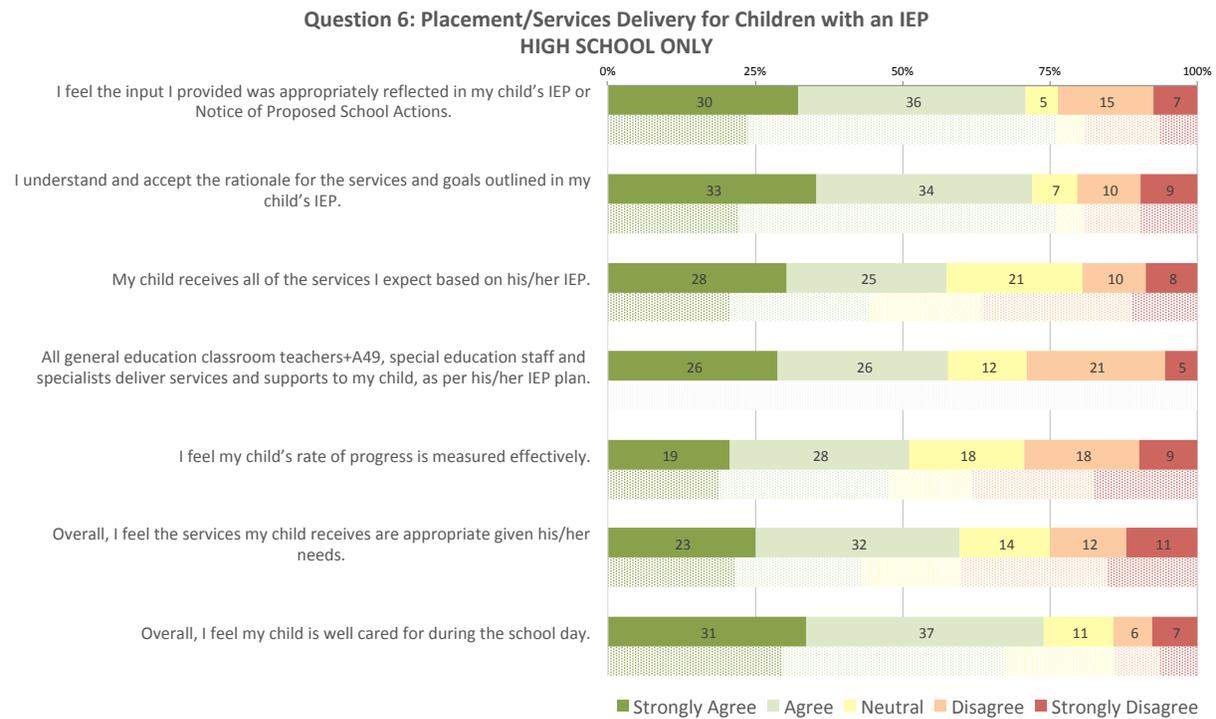
above 70% in 4 of the 7 statements. Most notable for the Middle School results for this question was the rate of improvement over the 2012 Survey responses. The number of respondents giving a positive response (Agree or Strongly Agree) to the statement “My child receives all the services I expect based on their IEP” increased from 44% (28) in 2012 to 66% (53) in 2019. Similarly, the number of negative responses (Disagree or Strongly Disagree) decreased from 37% (23) in 2012 to 14% (11) in 2019. Parents also responded much higher confidence in the appropriateness of services given, as positive responses (Agree or Strongly Agree) increased from 43% (28) to 67% (54) and negative responses (Disagree or Strongly Disagree) decreased from 40% (26) to 17% (14) of respondents. The 2019 results also showed meaningful improvements in parents’ confidence that their children are well cared for at school, with positive response rates (Agree or Strongly Agree) increasing from 67% (43) to 80% (64) and negative response rates (Disagree or Strongly Disagree) decreasing from 14% (9) to 9% (7).

The one area where middle school parents remain least satisfied is progress measurement, where only 56% (45) of respondents gave a positive (Agree or Strongly Agree) response that their child’s progress is measured effectively and 23% (18) of respondents gave a negative (Disagree or Strongly Disagree) response.

While there are notably still areas where positive responses remain below 70%, especially related to service delivery and progress measurement, overall these results indicate that parents feel meaningfully more confident in the IEP placement and service delivery for their children at the middle school level than they did in 2012.

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Graph 13: Placement/Services Delivery for High School Children with an IEP



Graph 14: Placement/Services Delivery for High School Children with an IEP Positive Versus Negative Response Rates

	Negative Response			Positive Response		
	2019	2012	Change	2019	2012	Change
I feel the input I provided was appropriately reflected in my child's IEP or Notice of Proposed School Actions.	24%	17%	6%	71%	72%	-1%
I understand and accept the rationale for the services and goals outlined in my child's IEP.	20%	20%	0%	72%	72%	0%
My child receives all of the services I expect based on his/her IEP.	20%	30%	-10%	58%	56%	1%
All general education classroom teachers, special education staff and specialists deliver services and supports to my child, as per his/her IEP plan.	29%			58%		
I feel my child's rate of progress is measured effectively.	29%	26%	4%	51%	53%	-2%
Overall, I feel the services my child receives are appropriate given his/her needs.	25%	32%	-7%	60%	55%	4%
Overall, I feel my child is well cared for during the school day.	14%	13%	2%	74%	72%	2%

We had 90 to 93 responses to Question 6 from parents with children on IEPs in high school, depending on the question. Responses to the Placement/Service Delivery for Children on an IEP questions were much more mixed for respondents with children in high school. There

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was minimal change in positive (Agree or Strongly Agree) response rates versus the 2012 results. Negative response rates were mixed, with increases in negative (Disagree or Strongly Disagree) response rates in 3 of the categories, no change in 2 of the categories, and improvement in 2 of the categories. We also saw the highest rates of dissatisfaction across the survey in this section, with 6 of the 7 categories reporting dissatisfaction (Disagree or Strongly Disagree) response rates at or above 20%.

24% (22) of respondents did not feel their input was appropriately reflected in the IEP versus 17% (11) in 2012, and 20% (19) gave negative responses (Disagree or Strongly Disagree) that they understood and agreed with the rationale for the services and goals outlined in the IEP. Only 58% (53) of respondents Agree or Strongly Agree that their child receives all the services mandated in the IEP and 20% (18) Disagree or Strongly Disagree. Most notable, 29% (26) of respondents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed that they believe all general education classroom teachers, special education staff, and specialists deliver the supports and services as per the IEP plan.

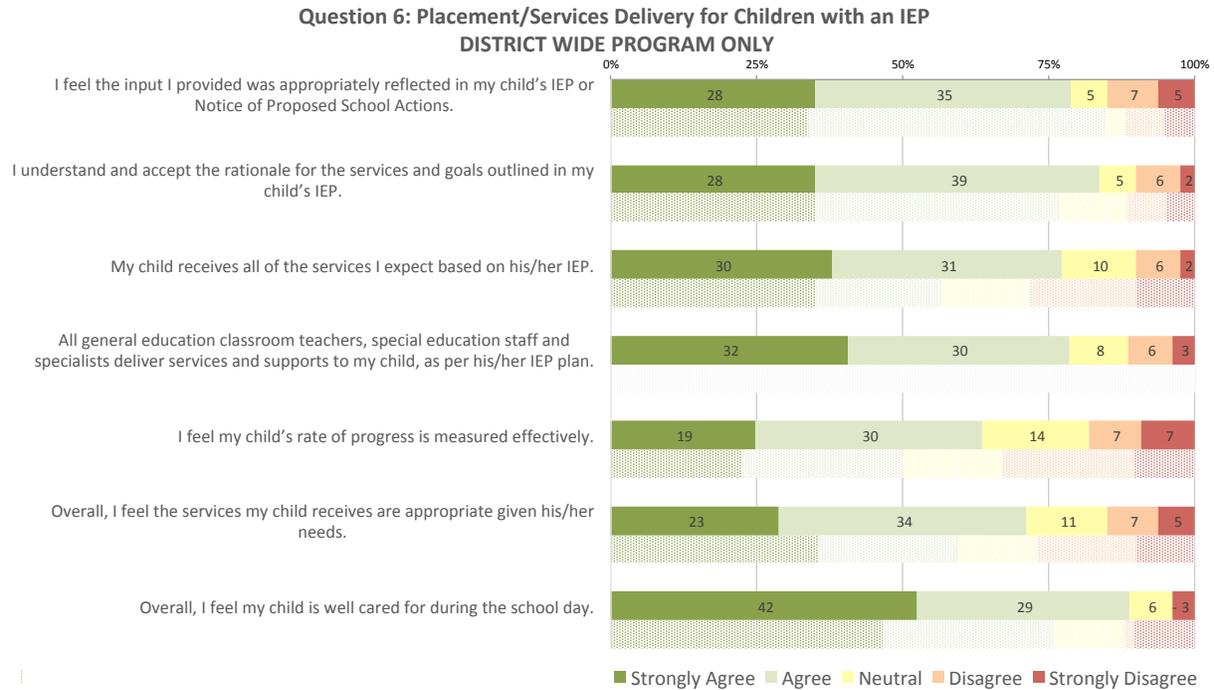
As in the other school levels, progress measurement remains a key area of concern for respondents, with only 51% (47) of respondents Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing that progress is measured effectively, and 29% (27) of respondents Disagreeing or Strongly Disagreeing with that statement.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS BY PROGRAM PLACEMENT

We also analyzed the data based on whether a child was located in their geo-coded (neighborhood) school or whether they participated in a district-wide special education program. We had 77-80 respondents in district-wide programs and 198-202 respondents with children in geo-coded schools, depending on the question.

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Graph 15: Placement/Services Delivery for Children in a District-wide Program with an IEP



**Graph 16: Placement/Services Delivery for Children in a District-wide Program with an IEP
Positive Versus Negative Response Rates**

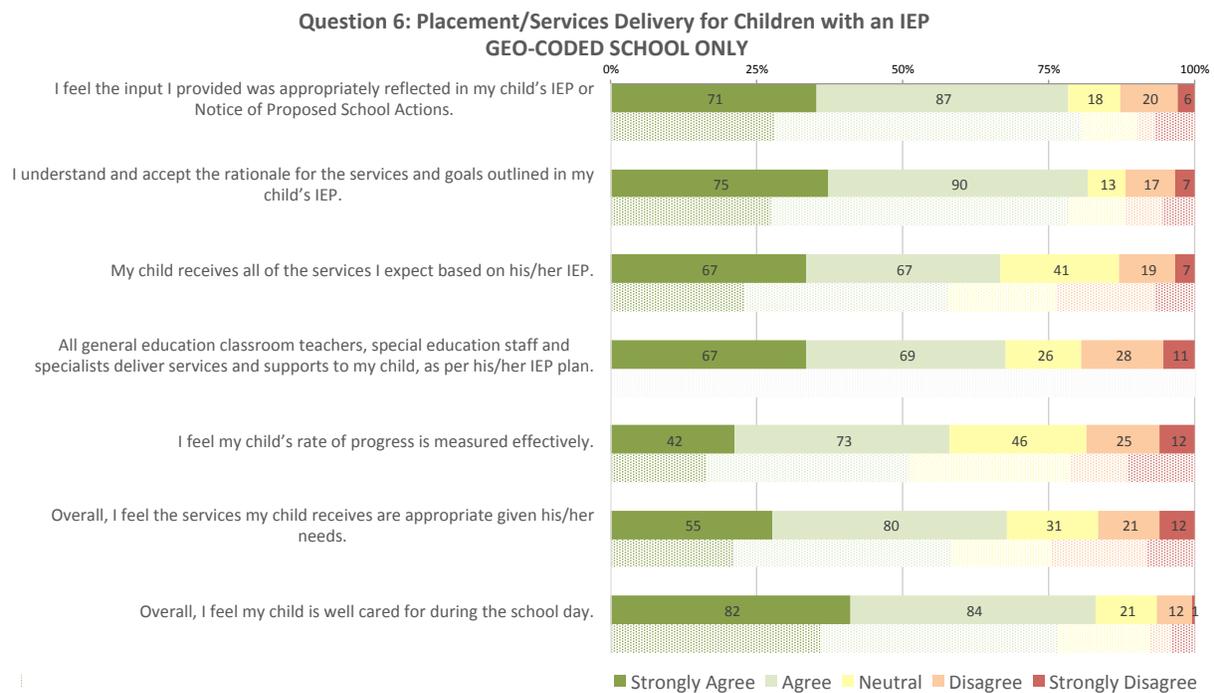
	Negative Response			Positive Response		
	2019	2012	Change	2019	2012	Change
I feel the input I provided was appropriately reflected in my child's IEP or Notice of Proposed School Actions.	15%	12%	3%	79%	85%	-6%
I understand and accept the rationale for the services and goals outlined in my child's IEP.	10%	12%	-2%	84%	77%	7%
My child receives all of the services I expect based on his/her IEP.	10%	28%	-18%	77%	57%	21%
All general education classroom teachers, special education staff and specialists deliver services and supports to my child, as per his/her IEP plan.	11%			78%		
I feel my child's rate of progress is measured effectively.	18%	33%	-15%	64%	50%	14%
Overall, I feel the services my child receives are appropriate given his/her needs.	15%	27%	-12%	71%	59%	12%
Overall, I feel my child is well cared for during the school day.	4%	12%	-8%	89%	76%	13%

For respondents with children in district-wide programs, we saw generally higher satisfaction rates related to Placement/Service Delivery for Children on an IEP, with 6 of the 7 statements receiving positive responses (Agree or Strongly Agree) above 70%. These results indicate that parents with children in the dedicated district-wide programs generally understand and

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accept the IEP, are confident in service delivery, and believe their children are well cared for at school. In addition, responses were more positive and less negative for this category of questions than responses were in 2012, with the most notable improvement in parent confidence that their child is receiving all mandated IEP services, increasing to 77% (61) positive (Agree or Strongly Agree) versus 57% (34) in 2012. The one exception to these positive trends related to parental input being appropriately reflected in the IEP, where the positive (Agree or Strongly Agree) response rate declined (79% versus 85%) and the negative (Disagree or Strongly Disagree) response rate increased (15% versus 12%). Parents clearly recognize that district-wide programs have the advantage of providing clusters of expertise within the district. However, parent responses indicate that an environment built around a premise of expertise can potentially be less accepting of parent opinions.

Graph 17: Placement/Services Delivery for Children in a Geo-coded School with an IEP



SURVEY RESULTS

Graph 18: Placement/Services Delivery for Children in a Geo-coded School with an IEP
Positive Versus Negative Response Rates

	Negative Response			Positive Response		
	2019	2012	Change	2019	2012	Change
I feel the input I provided was appropriately reflected in my child's IEP or Notice of Proposed School Actions.	13%	10%	3%	78%	80%	-2%
I understand and accept the rationale for the services and goals outlined in my child's IEP.	12%	12%	0%	82%	78%	3%
My child receives all of the services I expect based on his/her IEP.	13%	24%	-11%	67%	58%	9%
All general education classroom teachers, special education staff and specialists deliver services and supports to my child, as per his/her IEP plan.	19%			68%		
I feel my child's rate of progress is measured effectively.	19%	21%	-3%	58%	51%	7%
Overall, I feel the services my child receives are appropriate given his/her needs.	17%	25%	-8%	68%	58%	10%
Overall, I feel my child is well cared for during the school day.	7%	8%	-1%	83%	77%	6%

For respondents with children in their geo-coded schools, results also trended more positive and less negative than the 2012 survey results in almost all categories. Satisfaction rates around the development of the IEP were similar to respondents in district-wide programs, but satisfaction rates were lower on statements related to service delivery and progress measurement. Only two-thirds of respondents gave positive responses (Agree or Strongly Agree) that their child receives all the services outlined in the IEP (67%, 134), that the services are appropriate for their child's needs (68%, 135), and that general education classroom teachers, special education staff, and specialists deliver services and supports as per the IEP (68%, 136). We also saw a similar trend where positive responses (Agree or Strongly Agree) related to parental input being appropriately reflected in the IEP declined versus 2012 (78% versus 80%) and negative responses (Disagree or Strongly Disagree) increased (13% versus 10%).

Finally, progress measurement was a bigger concern to respondents with children on an IEP in a geo-coded school, with 58% (115) of respondents Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing that their child's rate of progress is measured effectively, while 19% (37) Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed.

PARENT COMMENTS

The parent comments regarding Placement/Services Delivery for Children with an IEP consistently highlighted the quality of the special education staff. For example, one parent

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commented that special education staff was “a literal dream team of educators.” Another stated that they are “amazed at the level of care/attention that is given to my child. My student really likes their support team, and even when my child is stressed, will go to school because they know ‘the team’ is there to help them through.”

While parents indicated they are generally satisfied with the IEP rationale and formulation, the comments indicated there are concerns around staff’s understanding of and adherence to the legal standards governing IEPs. The following comment summarizes well the concerns that ran throughout the comment section: “Training should be given to staff and administration on the IEP process and the law that underpins special education overall. There is a severe lack of knowledge or respect for the process that has been put in place to ensure all children receive a free and appropriate public education. IEPs are not often followed, goals continue to be written in confusing ways in which it is difficult to truly measure progress and are largely unchallenging, progress reports are few and far between, data is rarely shared and proactive adjustment to IEPs rarely occurs outside of the annual review processes.”

Parents’ comments indicated a high level of satisfaction with the quantity and breadth of services offered, however other comments provided insight into concerns around the implementation of services. Dissatisfaction with the reliance on pull-out services was a consistent theme pertaining to service delivery. One parent stated “I understand scheduling is complex, but it is very frustrating to have a child who may need extra support but has more transitions and is sometimes put in situations where they have less time to accomplish what is needed in the general classroom, because they were pulled out for extra specialized work.” Another parent echoed that sentiment, saying they “would like to see the IEP team focus on ways to solve educational needs in the classroom instead of relying on pull outs for everything.” A third parent stated, “my largest complaint around service delivery is the silos that exist between general education and special education. It, I believe, is the reason that many service providers and teachers feel the need to pull children out of class to deliver services. Children then are forced to miss valuable time in the general education setting, their schedules are full of transitions, they arrive late to class or are pulled from the middle of class which makes it even harder to understand what is going on—all of which makes it more difficult to access general education for students that already have difficulty due to their disabilities. I’m not sure if this makes it ‘easier’ for special education staff to do their job or if

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general education teachers would prefer it happen this way but it is a great disservice to children and serves to further stigmatize and segregate them. The fact is that children and their needs are on a continuum and if general education teachers could teach to the diversity which exist in their classes and truly collaborate with the special education department, the needs of ALL children would be better met, including those who don't qualify for special education at all but do require differentiation of instruction to succeed."

Another theme throughout parent comments related to Placement/Service Delivery for Children on an IEP was the desire for more general education staff ownership of special education students. Comments consistently stated that general education staff are not familiar with their child's IEP or don't consistently provide accommodations. One parent stated, "Most of the general education teachers are not aware of my child's IEP and have not read it—although they say they have." Another parent stated "The special education teacher is nice but the IEP is not working in part because my child has a mix of issues and because their regular ed teachers don't understand the IEP and what it says, even though it has been discussed multiple times." A third parent stated, "The IEP is constructed well, but almost completely ignored by general education teachers."

The low satisfaction rates around progress monitoring in the quantitative data also appeared in the parent comments. Concerns fell into two categories—concern around goals being too low or not individualized, and a lack of consistent information on progress. Pertaining to goal development, one parent stated, "IEP team is great. However, I feel that the team often accepts any progress as 'enough' and allows our child to slip below grade level expectations without telling us...Communication of progress needs to improve across the board with as many details as possible." Another parent stated, "Lots of love but very low expectations of our children, which becomes a cap on education for our child." Relating to progress updates, one parent summarized the concern by stating "It's difficult to answer some of these questions due to only truly getting an update/review of your child's progress 2x per year."

The final topic that permeated throughout the comments around IEP Placement and Service Delivery was that parents do not always feel their input is well-received by the IEP teams. One parent stated that during an IEP meeting staff "politely nodded and then went on with their meeting as if I had not spoken in English. Then they went on to draft the IEP with no input from me." Another stated, "In these meetings I have the feeling I am just a chess piece.

SURVEY RESULTS

I don't know if they even listen to me. They have their agenda and they follow it." Another parent echoed the sentiment, stating "I feel parent input is listened to but has no impact on the end result, which is determined in advance of the meeting."

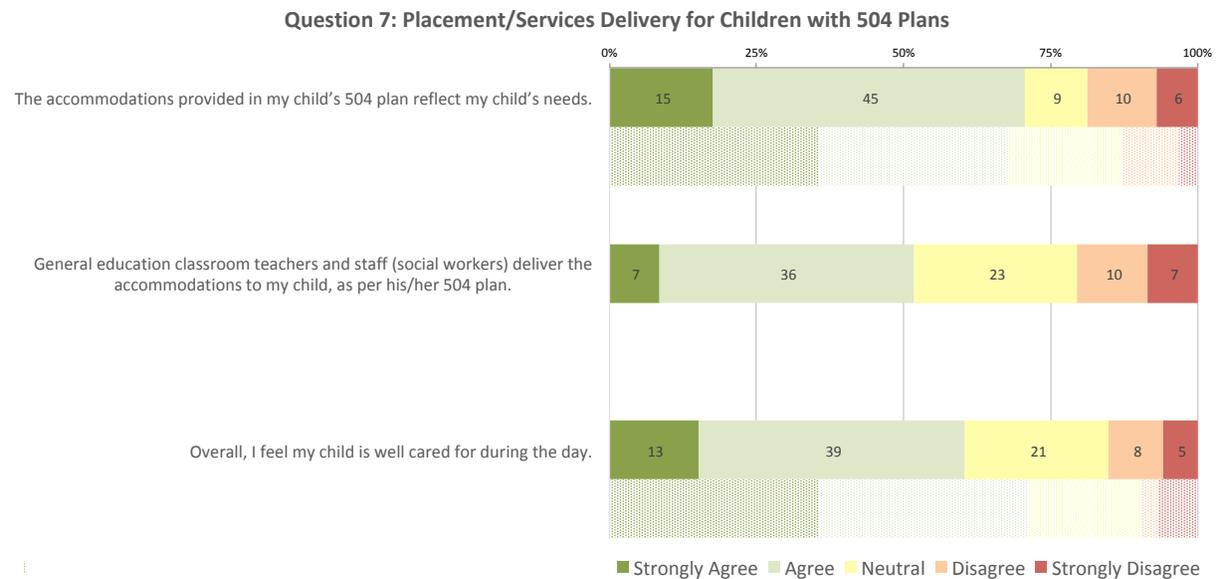
SURVEY RESULTS

Placement and Service Delivery for Children with 504 Plans (Question 7)

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS—ALL SCHOOL LEVELS

Question 7 focused on the Placement and Service Delivery for children with 504 Plans. There were 87 respondents for this set of questions.

Graph 19: Placement/Services Delivery for Children on 504 Plans



Graph 20: Placement/Services Delivery for Children on 504 Plans Positive Versus Negative Response Rates

	Negative Response			Positive Response		
	2019	2012	Change	2019	2012	Change
The accommodations provided in my child's 504 plan reflect my child's needs.	19%	13%	6%	71%	68%	3%
General education classroom teachers and staff (social workers) deliver the accommodations to my child, as per his/her 504 plan.	20%			52%		
Overall, I feel my child is well cared for during the day.	15%	10%	5%	60%	71%	-11%

In general, parents of children with 504 plans reported lower rates of positive responses and higher rates of negative responses than parents of children on IEPs.

SURVEY RESULTS

As with parents of children on IEP plans, parent satisfaction was greatest for the service plan creation. 71% (60) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the accommodations provided in the 504 Plan reflected their child's needs.

However, parent satisfaction around plan delivery and the overall care of their children was less positive. 52% (43) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that general education classroom teachers and social workers deliver the accommodations outlined in the 504 plan, 28% (23) gave a Neutral response, and 20% (17) Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed. In addition, 60% (52) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that their child was well cared for during the day, 24% (21) gave a Neutral response, and 15% (13) Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed. While it is worth noting that parents' feelings around the care of their children showed a worsening trend from 2012, we caution drawing conclusions as the sample size in 2012 was relatively small (31) for this category.

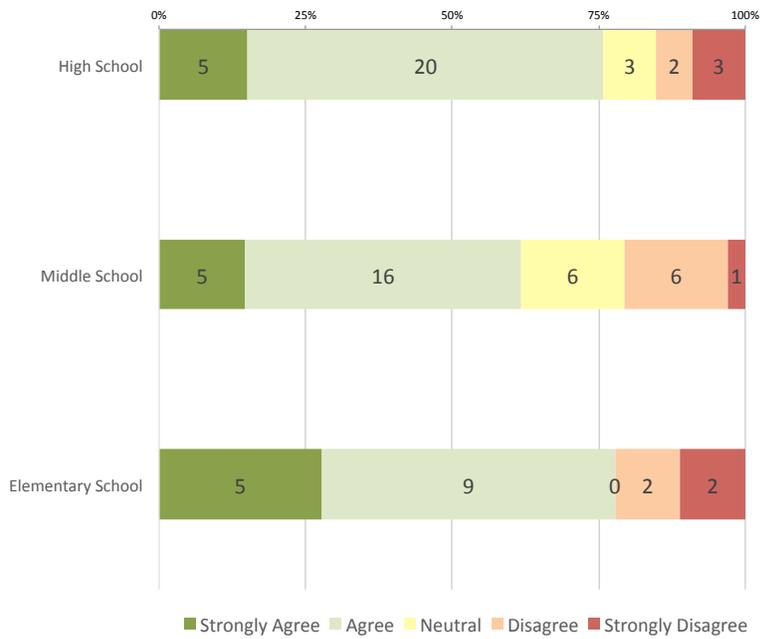
QUANTITATIVE RESULTS BY SCHOOL LEVEL

Because of the lower number of respondents for this category in 2012, we are not providing sub-analysis comparisons to the 2012 data. However, given the larger sample size in 2019 we are able to provide data for 2019 by school level.

SURVEY RESULTS

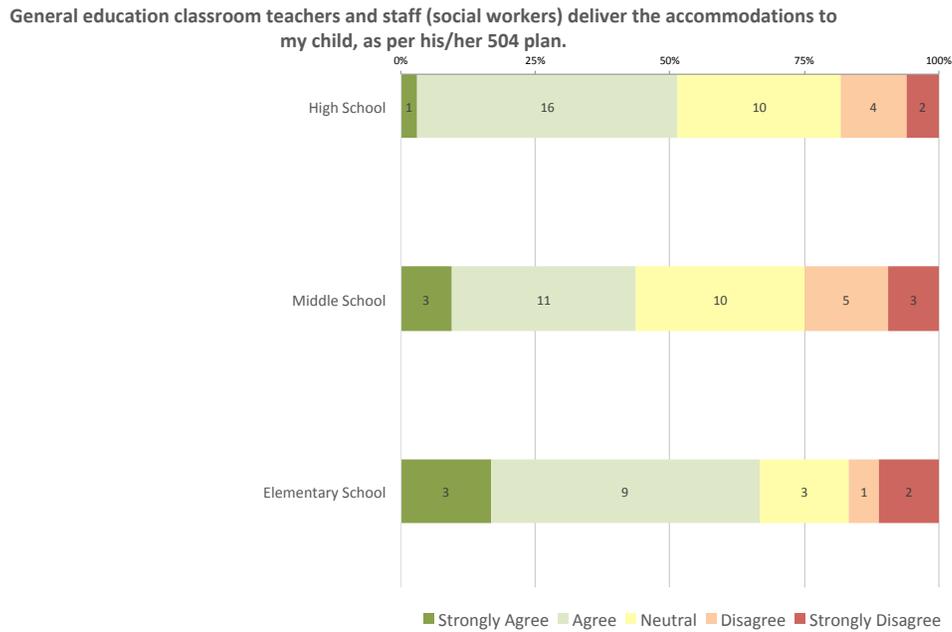
Graph 21: The accommodations provided in my child's 504 plan reflect my child's needs (School Level)

The accommodations provided in my child's 504 plan reflect my child's needs.



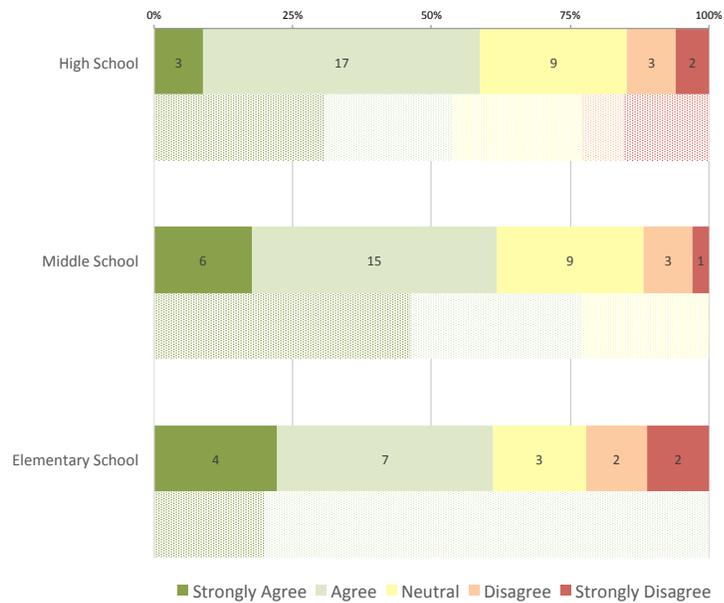
SURVEY RESULTS

Graph 22: General education classroom teachers and staff (social workers) deliver the accommodations to my child, as per their 504 plan (School Level)



Graph 23: Overall, I feel my child is well cared for during the day (School Level)

Overall, I feel my child is well cared for during the day.



SURVEY RESULTS

Respondents with children in elementary school reported the highest rates of satisfaction, with 78% (14) of respondents Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing that the accommodations provided in their child's 504 plan reflect their child's needs. 67% (12) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that general education classroom teachers and staff deliver the accommodations outline in the 504 Plan, and 61% (11) Agreed or Strongly Agreed that their child was well cared for during the school day.

Parents were less satisfied that the 504 Plan reflected their child's needs in middle school, with only 62% (21) of respondents reporting a positive response (Agree or Strongly Agree). Furthermore, only 62% (21) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that their child was well cared for during the school day and only 44% (14) Agreed or Strongly Agreed that general education classroom teachers and staff deliver the accommodations per the 504 Plan. Of note, 25% (8) of respondents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed that general education staff deliver the accommodations outlined in the 504 Plan.

Parent opinions of 504 Placement and Service Delivery at the high school level improved somewhat from the middle school level. 76% (25) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the 504 Plan accommodations reflected their child's needs. However, concerns remain around general education staff's adherence to the 504 Plans, as only 52% (17) of respondents gave a positive (Agree or Strongly Agree) to whether general education teachers and staff deliver the accommodations per the 504 Plan and only 59% (20) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that their high school student was well cared for during the day.

PARENT COMMENTS

As with the IEP Placement/Service Delivery section, many parents gave high marks to the quality and caring of staff members, particularly in the guidance department. One parent commented, "My child is very well cared for by the guidance department." Another stated, "It feels amazing to know that your child has an entire team to support their needs."

Parents also generally felt the accommodations provided in their child's 504 Plan were well designed and appropriate. However, delivery of those accommodations consistently disappointed, particularly related to general education staff's awareness and understanding of each child's 504 Plan and the delivery of accommodations. Parents consistently reported that general education staff is unfamiliar with the accommodations outlined in their child's

SURVEY RESULTS

504 plan. One parent stated, “The 504 has all the accommodations that my child needs on paper, but the teacher is not doing it although they say they do.” Summarizing many comments in this segment, one parent stated they “have consistently had difficulty having my child’s 504 plan followed simply because they “look like a typical child” and does not stand out as a “student with needs.”

Parents indicate that achieving consistent accommodations for children on 504 plans gets more difficult as children move into middle school and high school, where parents believe teachers rely too heavily on self-advocacy. One parent said, “I really don’t think that my child’s 504 plan is properly and consistently implemented at the middle school level. The communication between on and off team teachers shows that lack of awareness of what the plan encompasses.” One parent summed up the high school concerns by saying, “It is 100% on the child to know and activate and then advocate and then pull in their counselor and then parents to get the 504 accommodations. If the child is embarrassed it is pulling teeth to get the accommodations.”

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR QUESTION 6 AND QUESTION 7

Integrate survey results and LPS response into work of the already established Community Input Team focused on Inclusion.

Provide supplementary professional learning opportunities throughout the year, including support for school leaders around supporting educators’ consistent implementation of IEP/504 accommodations.

Develop staff guidance and expectations for reading IEPs and 504s.

Explore development of a reporting system for Special Education service delivery to ensure transparency and accountability.

Develop a formal mechanism to report progress in the fall of each year.

Continue to include Special Education and Guidance staff as part of the curriculum review process.

Improve the use of data and staff planning teams to review outcomes and make adjustments to instruction as needed.

SURVEY RESULTS

Specifically incorporate the needs of students in Special Education into the Synthesis Teams formed to implement the evaluation of graduation requirements as part of the district's Strategic Plan.

Expand co-taught classes and broaden the view of inclusion practices.

SURVEY RESULTS

Partnering with Parents and Outside Experts (Question 8)

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS—ALL SCHOOL LEVELS

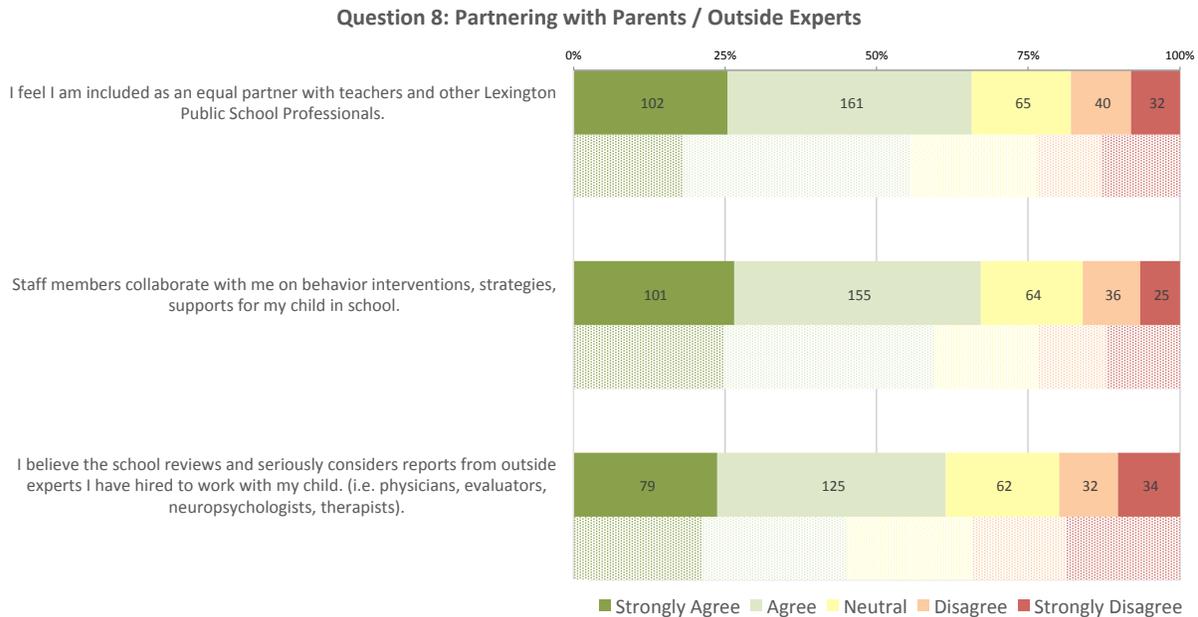
Question 8 focused on parent opinions on how well Lexington Public Schools partners with both parents and outside experts hired by parents.

These questions are important because according to federal and state law, parents must be treated as equal members of their child's team (which may include multiple Lexington Public School team members). In addition, many parents of children with special needs must seek outside expert evaluations in order for their child to be diagnosed with a disability (the public school system does not provide a disability diagnosis, but rather assigns a child a disability category during the special education evaluation process). Finally, many parents work with outside experts to supplement services provided by the public school system (such as private therapists or tutors), or to seek additional opinions on service delivery and placement.

Because not all parents of children with special needs hire outside experts, there was a high number of respondents who selected the N/A category for this set of questions. In the graphs and discussion below, we have removed the respondents who selected N/A from the calculation of percentages.

SURVEY RESULTS

Graph 24: Partnering with Parents/Outside Experts



Graph 25: Partnering with Parents/Outside Experts Positive Versus Negative Response Rates

	Negative Response			Positive Response		
	2019	2012	Change	2019	2012	Change
I feel I am included as an equal partner with teachers and other Lexington Public School Professionals.	18%	24%	-6%	66%	56%	10%
Staff members collaborate with me on behavior interventions, strategies, supports for my child in school.	16%	23%	-7%	67%	59%	8%
I believe the school reviews and seriously considers reports from outside experts I have hired to work with my child. (i.e. physicians, evaluators, neuropsychologists, therapists).	20%	34%	-14%	61%	45%	17%

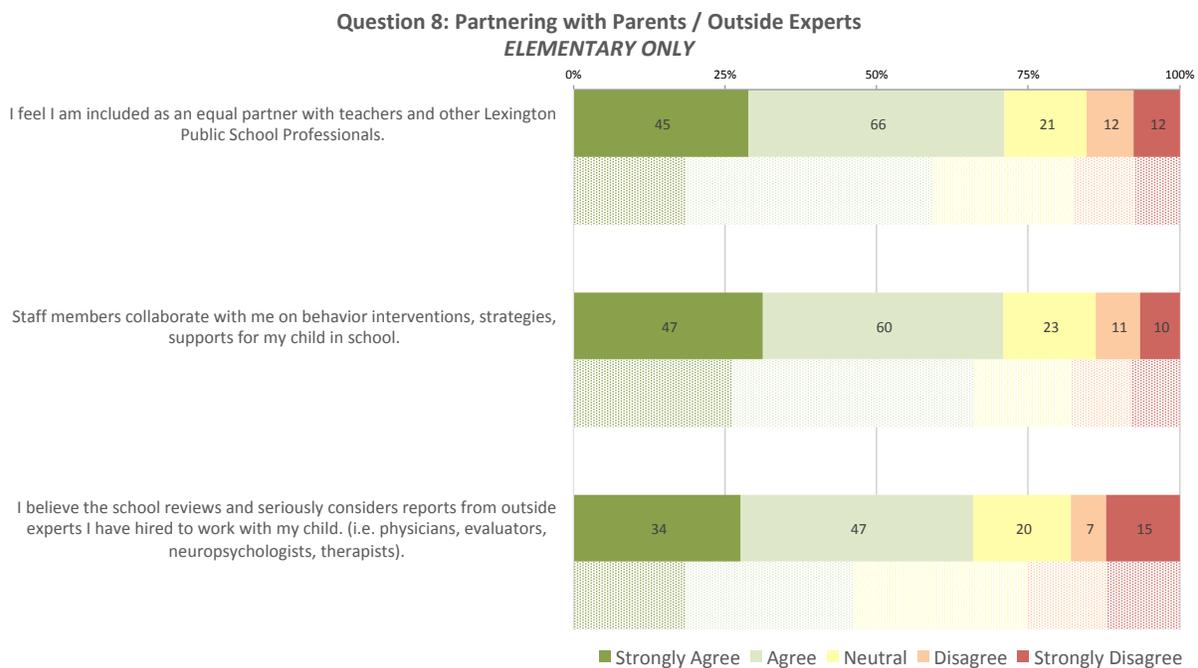
All of the 2019 responses showed positive trends versus the 2012 results, meaning the number of positive (Agree or Strongly Agree) responses increased while the negative (Disagree or Strongly Disagree) responses decreased. However, absolute results indicate that there is often still tension between parents and staff, and the positive response rates in this category were consistently low. When asked if they were included as equal partners, 66% (263) of the 400 respondents said they Agreed or Strongly Agreed, while 18% (72) said the Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed. 67% (256) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that staff members collaborate on behavior interventions, strategies, or supports for their child in school while 16% (61) Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed. Finally, 61% (204) Agreed or Strongly

SURVEY RESULTS

Agreed that the school reviews and seriously considers outside experts working with their child, and 18% (66) Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed that outside experts are seriously considered. This is one of the few categories where the number of parents who Strongly Disagreed was greater than the number who Disagreed.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS BY SCHOOL LEVEL

Graph 26: Partnering with Parents & Outside Experts for Elementary School Children



Graph 27: Partnering with Parents & Outside Experts for Elementary School Children

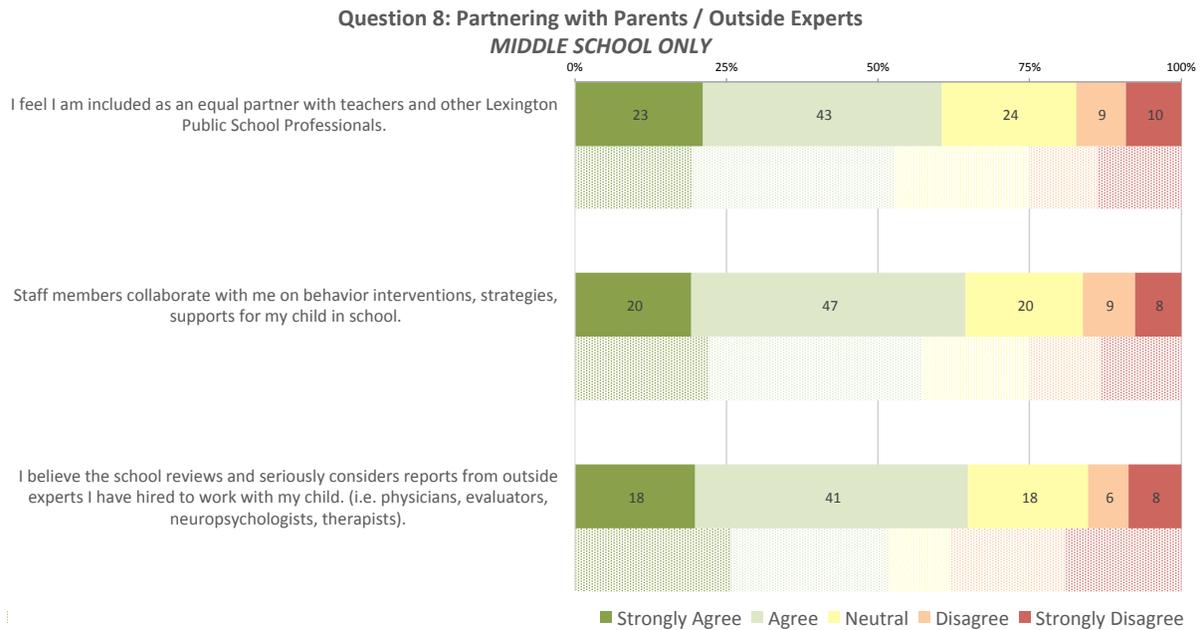
Positive Versus Negative Response Rates

	Negative Response			Positive Response		
	2019	2012	Change	2019	2012	Change
I feel I am included as an equal partner with teachers and other Lexington Public School Professionals.	15%	18%	-2%	71%	59%	12%
Staff members collaborate with me on behavior interventions, strategies, supports for my child in school.	14%	18%	-4%	71%	66%	5%
I believe the school reviews and seriously considers reports from outside experts I have hired to work with my child. (i.e. physicians, evaluators, neuropsychologists, therapists).	18%	25%	-7%	66%	46%	20%

SURVEY RESULTS

In reviewing the Partnering with Parents and Outside Experts results at the school level, we continue to see the highest satisfaction at the elementary school level. 71% (111) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they felt included as an equal partner, and 71% (107) of respondents also Agreed or Strongly Agreed that staff members collaborated on behavior interventions, strategies, and supports for their child in school. While only 66% (81) of parents believed outside expert reports were seriously considered, it is important to note that this represented meaningful improvement from 2012, when only 46% (35) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed with that statement.

Graph 28: Partnering with Parents & Outside Experts for Middle School Children



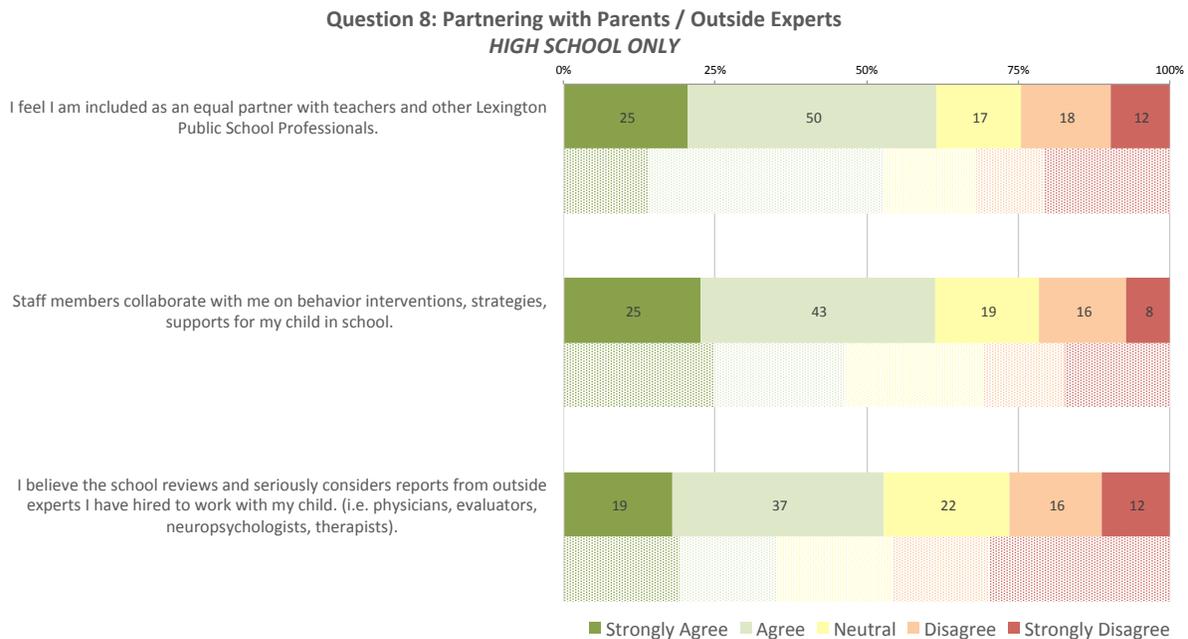
Graph 29: Partnering with Parents & Outside Experts for Middle School Children Positive Versus Negative Response Rates

	Negative Response			Positive Response		
	2019	2012	Change	2019	2012	Change
I feel I am included as an equal partner with teachers and other Lexington Public School Professionals.	17%	25%	-8%	61%	53%	8%
Staff members collaborate with me on behavior interventions, strategies, supports for my child in school.	16%	25%	-9%	64%	57%	7%
I believe the school reviews and seriously considers reports from outside experts I have hired to work with my child. (i.e. physicians, evaluators, neuropsychologists, therapists).	15%	38%	-23%	65%	52%	13%

SURVEY RESULTS

Parent satisfaction rates were lower for middle school students, with only 61% (66) of respondents Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing that they feel included as an equal partner. 64% (67) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that staff members were collaborative, and 65% (59) Agreed or Strongly Agreed that outside expert reports were seriously considered. As in elementary school, all middle school results in 2019 showed improvement from 2012.

Graph 30: Partnering with Parents & Outside Experts for High School Children



Graph 31: Partnering with Parents & Outside Experts for High School Children Positive Versus Negative Response Rates

	Negative Response			Positive Response		
	2019	2012	Change	2019	2012	Change
I feel I am included as an equal partner with teachers and other Lexington Public School Professionals.	25%	32%	-7%	61%	53%	9%
Staff members collaborate with me on behavior interventions, strategies, supports for my child in school.	22%	31%	-9%	61%	46%	15%
I believe the school reviews and seriously considers reports from outside experts I have hired to work with my child. (i.e. physicians, evaluators, neuropsychologists, therapists).	26%	46%	-19%	53%	35%	18%

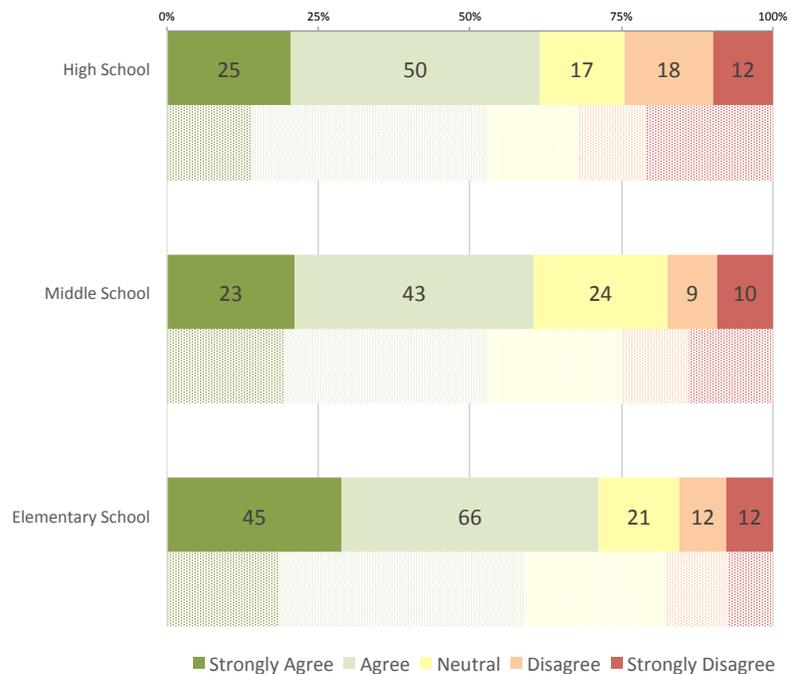
Positive responses (Agree or Strongly Agree) to Partnering with Parents and Outside Experts at the high school level were similar to middle school results. 61% (75) of respondents with high school students Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they felt included as an equal partner

SURVEY RESULTS

and 61% (68) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that staff collaborated with them on strategies and supports for their child. 53% (56) of respondents gave a positive response (Agree or Strongly Agree) that outside expert reports are reviewed and seriously considered. The negative responses at the high school level, however, were meaningfully higher than at both the elementary and middle school level. 25% (30) of respondents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed that they felt included and an equal partner, 22% (24) of respondents felt staff members did not collaborate with parents (Disagree or Strongly Disagree), and 26% (28) of respondents did believe that the school reviews and seriously considers outside expert reports.

Graph 32: I feel I am included as an equal partner with teachers and other Lexington Public School Professionals (School Level)

I feel I am included as an equal partner with teachers and other Lexington Public School Professionals..

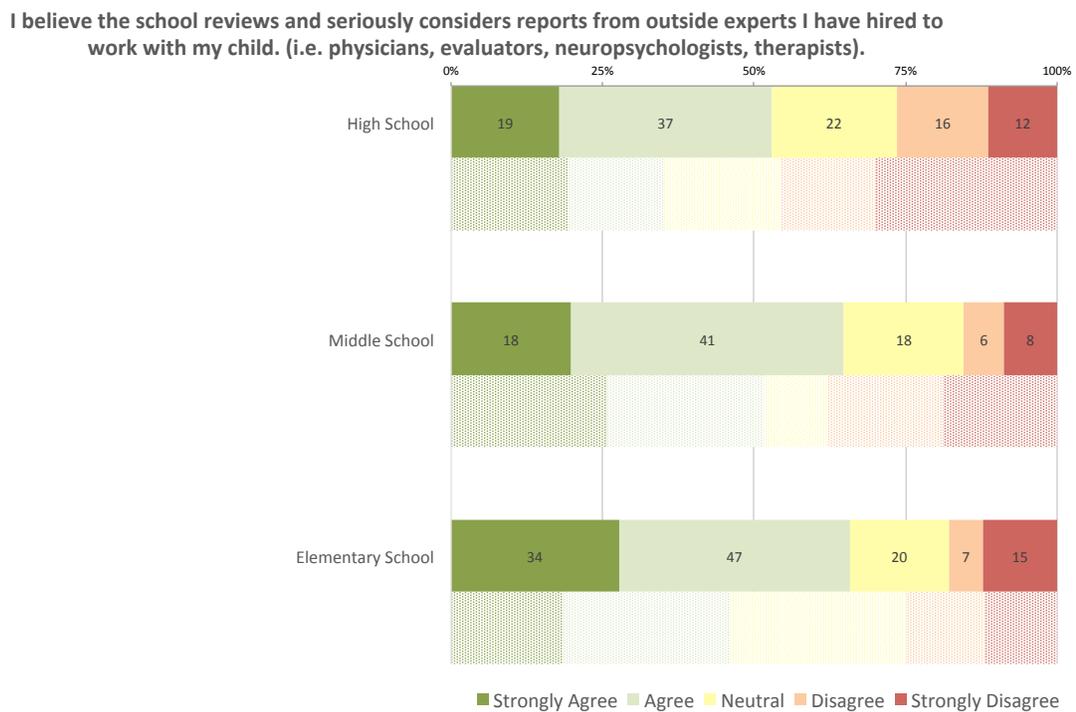


Across school levels there are some interesting trends. As stated above, elementary school parents responded with the highest levels of satisfaction. For the statement “I am included as an equal partner with teachers and other Lexington Public School Professionals”, 71% (111) of elementary school respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed compared to 61% (66) of

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middle school respondents and 61% (75) of high school respondents. Conversely, the highest levels of dissatisfaction for this statement were at the high school level, with 25% (30) of high school parents Disagreeing or Strongly Disagreeing, compared to 17% (19) of middle school parents and 15% (24) of elementary school parents.

Graph 33: I believe the school reviews and seriously considers reports from outside experts (School Level)

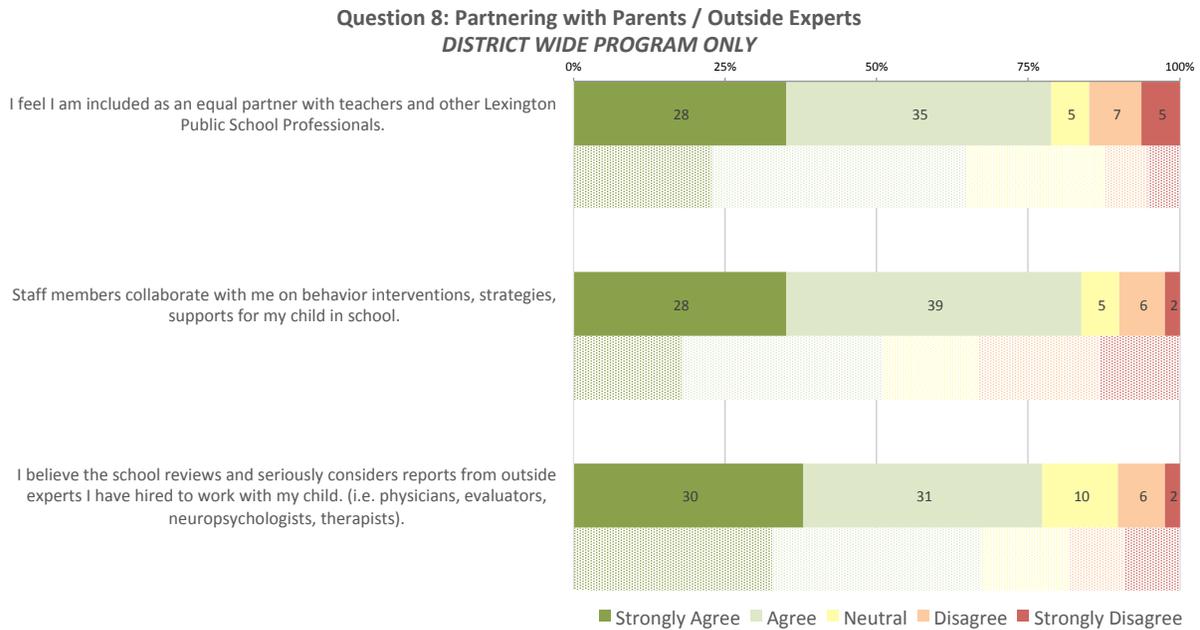


While parents have mixed feelings around the district’s consideration of outside expert reports, it is worth noting that this area saw some of the largest improvements from 2012, as both positive responses (Agree or Strongly Agree) increased substantially across school levels and negative responses (Disagree or Strongly Disagree) meaningfully decreased.

SURVEY RESULTS

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS BY PROGRAM PLACEMENT

Graph 34: Partnering with Parents & Outside Experts for Students in District-wide Programs



Graph 35: Partnering with Parents & Outside Experts for Students in District-wide

Programs Positive Versus Negative Response Rates

	Negative Response			Positive Response		
	2019	2012	Change	2019	2012	Change
I feel I am included as an equal partner with teachers and other Lexington Public School Professionals.	20%	12%	8%	67%	65%	2%
Staff members collaborate with me on behavior interventions, strategies, supports for my child in school.	18%	33%	-16%	70%	51%	19%
I believe the school reviews and seriously considers reports from outside experts I have hired to work with my child. (i.e. physicians, evaluators, neuropsychologists, therapists).	20%	18%	2%	61%	67%	-6%

Parents of children in District-wide programs had mixed feelings around Partnering with Parents and Outside Experts. Parents gave staff strong marks for collaboration, with 70% (63) of respondents giving a positive response (Agree or Strongly Agree) to the statement “Staff members collaborate with me on behavior interventions, strategies, and supports for my child in school.” Relative to 2012, positive responses (Agree or Strongly Agree) on staff

SURVEY RESULTS

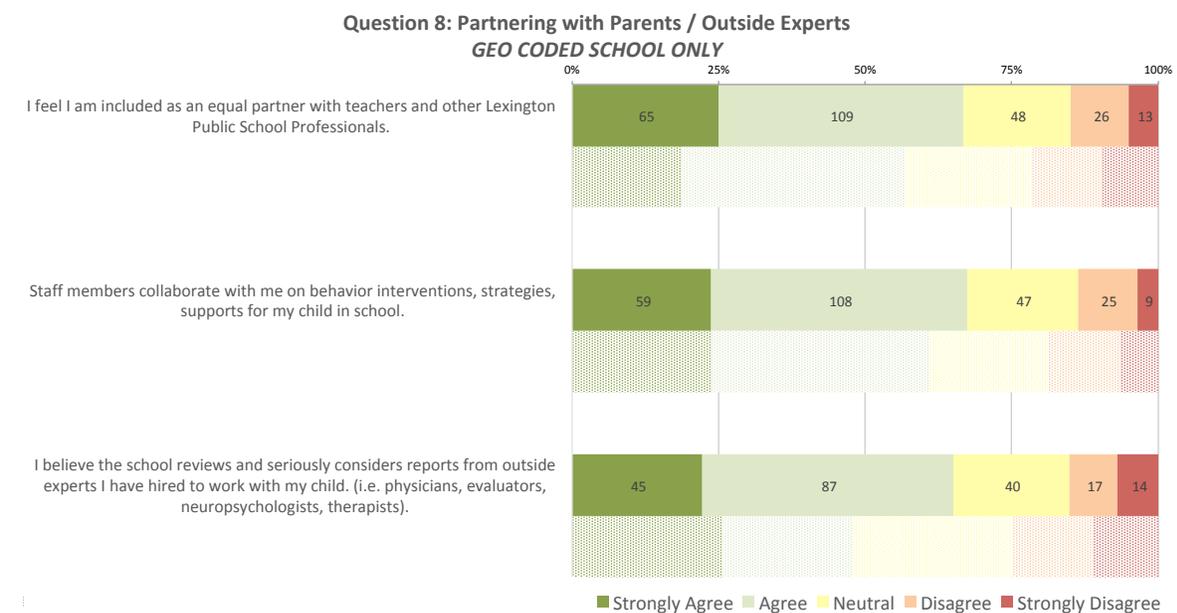
collaboration increased to 70% from 51%, and negative responses (Disagree or Strongly Disagree) declined from 33% to 18%.

Parents in district-wide programs felt less confident regarding their status on the IEP team. While 67% (73) of respondents gave a positive response (Agree or Strongly Agree) to the statement “I feel I am included as an equal partner with teachers and other LPS professionals,” 20% (19) of respondents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed. Of note, the negative (Disagree or Strongly Disagree) response rate increased from 12% in 2012 to 20% in 2019.

Similarly, parents in district-wide programs felt less confident outside expert reports were seriously considered. 61% (51) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the school reviews and seriously considers outside expert reports, a decline from the 67% (37) positive response rate in 2012. Additionally, the negative (Disagree or Strongly Disagree) response rate increased from 18% (10) in 2012 to 20% (17) in 2019.

Taken in the context of Question 6’s negative trends around parental input within district-wide programs, there seems to be a consistent theme that parents do not feel like an equal part of the Team and that the value of the private evaluations are not considered seriously.

Graph 36: Partnering with Parents & Outside Experts for Students in Geo-coded Schools



SURVEY RESULTS

Graph 37: Partnering with Parents & Outside Experts for Students in Geo-coded Schools
Positive Versus Negative Response Rates

	Negative Response			Positive Response		
	2019	2012	Change	2019	2012	Change
I feel I am included as an equal partner with teachers and other Lexington Public School Professionals.	15%	22%	-7%	67%	57%	10%
Staff members collaborate with me on behavior interventions, strategies, supports for my child in school.	14%	19%	-5%	67%	61%	6%
I believe the school reviews and seriously considers reports from outside experts I have hired to work with my child. (i.e. physicians, evaluators, neuropsychologists, therapists).	15%	25%	-10%	65%	48%	17%

Parents of students attending their geo-coded (neighborhood) school reported consistent results across the three Partnership questions, with all statements receiving positive (Agree or Strongly Agree) response rates below 70%. Specifically, 67% (174) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they felt like an equal partner, 67% (167) Agreed or Strongly Agreed that staff members were collaborative, and 65% (132) Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the school seriously considers outside expert evaluations.

While overall positive (Agree or Strongly Agree) response rates were below 70%, all statements showed improvement from 2012, both with positive (Agree and Strongly Agree) and negative (Disagree and Strongly Disagree) response rates trending in the right direction.

PARENT COMMENTS

In-line with quantitative results that showed some of the lowest levels of satisfaction in the survey, the majority of comments in this section were negative, with the common themes of perceived staff dismissiveness of parent input and disregard for outside expert opinion. Relating to parental input, one parent stated, “We do not always feel like equal partners on the IEP team. There seems to be an attitude of ‘we know best’ and a hesitancy to try new approaches. We often give suggestions for alternative approaches, and more often than not feel like our insights are brushed off.” This sentiment was repeated throughout the comments: “I sometimes feel that they feel they know best and leave me out of the equation. I sometimes feel judged.” “There is very much a ‘we know everything’ attitude.” “I do not feel like an equal member of the IEP team. A parent is an enormous asset and feedback should be weighed equally with educators.”

SURVEY RESULTS

There were also concerns around staff's willingness to collaborate or explore alternative approaches for individual students, instead relying on current programs already in-place. As one parent states, "The team conclusion was not how can we meet these needs but rather here is our program and we may touch on those items when you get here." Another parent put it this way: "They only offer what the program offers and they don't look at the needs of the whole child. If you fit the box for what they offer, you are fine but if you don't fit squarely within the box, the child suffers greatly."

Finally, parents remain discouraged with the IEP teams' review and consideration of outside expert evaluations and the teams' willingness to collaborate with outside providers. One parent stated, "Outside reports are rarely given the weight they deserve. Parents are spending their money and time to bring outside expertise into the team process for a singular reason—to help the staff to help their kids. Ideally these suggestions should assist teams in creating individualized education programs that truly meet the needs of children, but, more often than not, they are wholly dismissed. I'm not sure if staff feel that 'they know best' and are adverse to outside opinions but it creates a hostile team environment which is not in the best interest of children. Another parent commented, "This is the one area that I wish LPS/SPED was better at. They have a little bit of a hard time taking outside evals seriously. It's like if they don't build it they don't respect it. Such a shame since often times the outside work sheds far more light than any LPS testing could do."

RECOMMENDATIONS

Establish a follow up process for outside evaluations that are conducted on students who are not on an IEP or 504 Plan.

Provide more robust community communication and education about these processes via SEPAC support and additional SEPAC coffees hosted by the building ETS in the spring.

Share survey results with staff and discuss implications and ways to improve upon current approaches to communication and family partnerships.

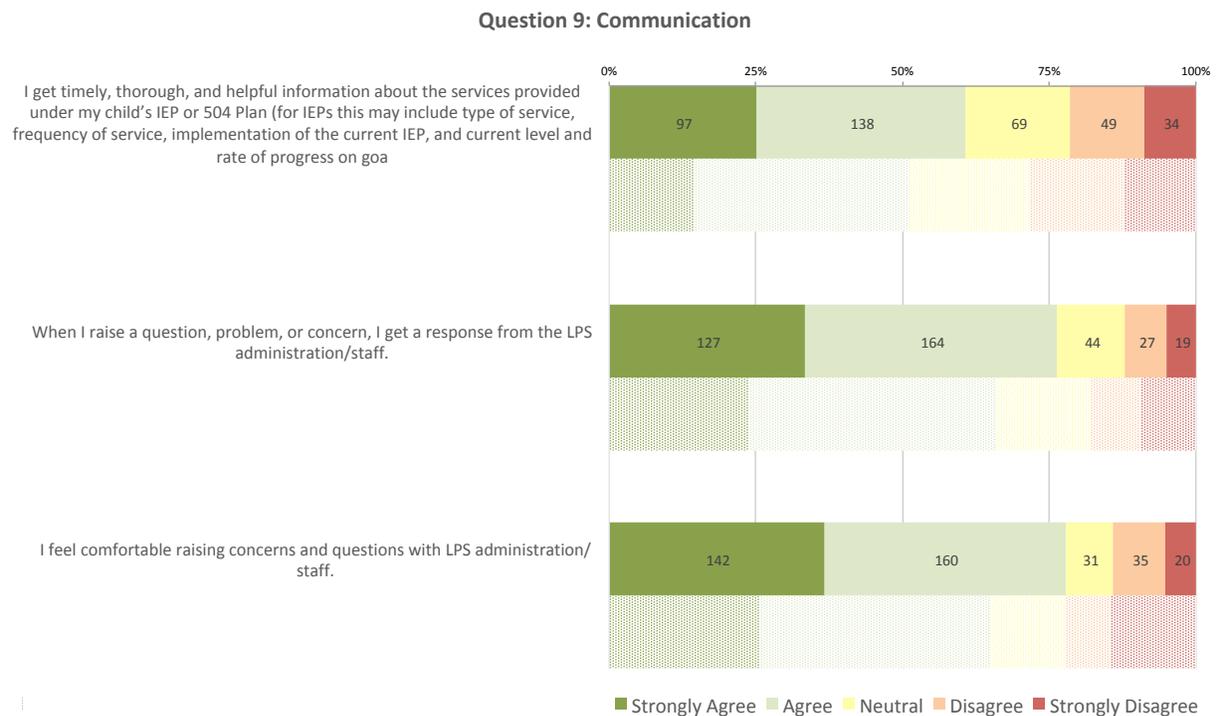
SURVEY RESULTS

Communication (Question 9)

In this section, we were interested in gauging parent perspectives on both the timeliness of communication about their child’s services and whether parents felt comfortable raising concerns/questions with LPS administration and staff.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS—ALL SCHOOL LEVELS

Graph 38: Communication



SURVEY RESULTS

Graph 39: Communication Positive Versus Negative Response Rates

	Negative Response			Positive Response		
	2019	2012	Change	2019	2012	Change
I get timely, thorough, and helpful information about the services provided under my child's IEP or 504 Plan (for IEPs this may include type of service, frequency of service, implementation of the current IEP, and current level and rate of progress on goals.)	21%	28%	-7%	61%	51%	10%
When I raise a question, problem, or concern, I get a response from the LPS administration/staff.	12%	18%	-6%	76%	66%	11%
I feel comfortable raising concerns and questions with LPS administration/staff.	14%	22%	-8%	78%	65%	13%

As the chart shows, 61% (128) of respondents either Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they received timely information about the services their child receives in their IEP or 504 Plan. 20% (51) of respondents were Neutral, and 21% (71) respondents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed.

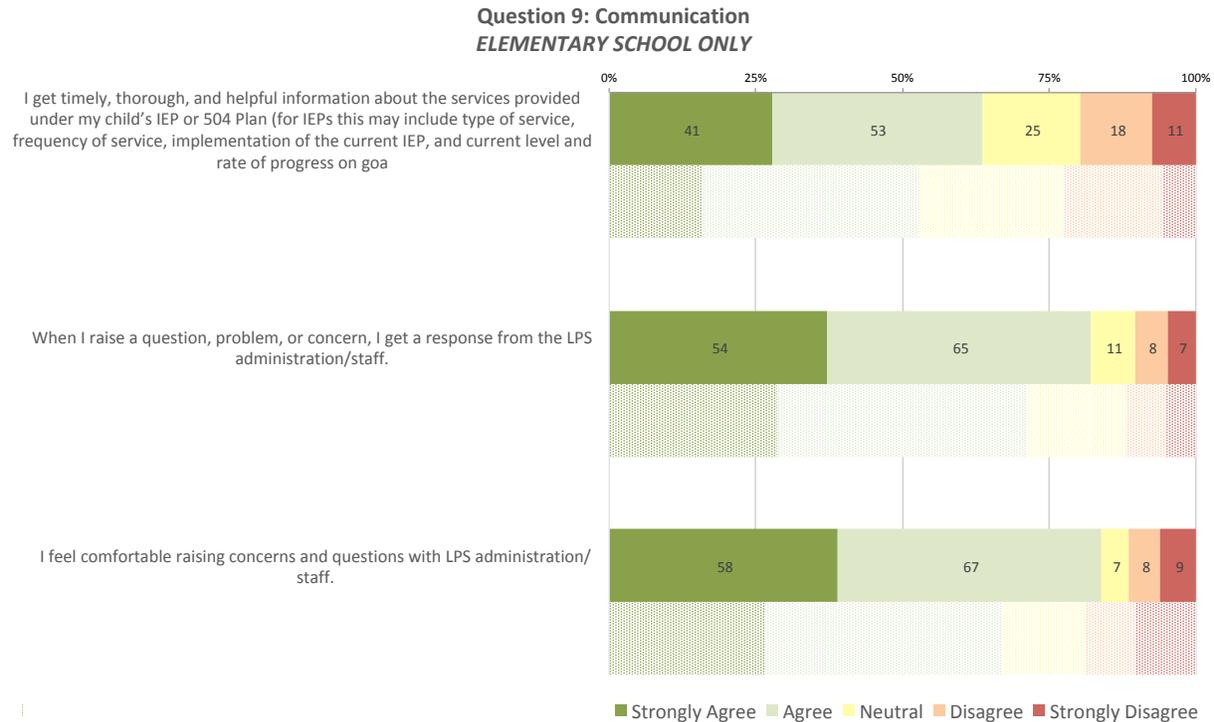
Regarding parent perspectives on getting a response to questions or concerns from LPS administration or staff, the results were more favorable. 76% (291) or respondents gave a positive (Agree or Strongly Agree) response to the statement “When I raise a question, problem, or concern, I get a response from LPS administration/staff,” and 12% (46) gave a negative (Disagree or Strongly Disagree) response. Given the improvement relative to the 2012 response rate, it appears the 1 school working day communication response policy put in place after the 2012 survey has had a positive impact.

Parents report feeling comfortable raising concerns and questions with LPS administration and staff, with 78% (302) Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing and 14% (55) Disagreeing or Strongly Disagreeing.

SURVEY RESULTS

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS BY SCHOOL LEVEL

Graph 40: Communication with Respondents with Elementary School Children



Graph 41: Communication with Respondents with Elementary School Children Positive Versus Negative Response Rates

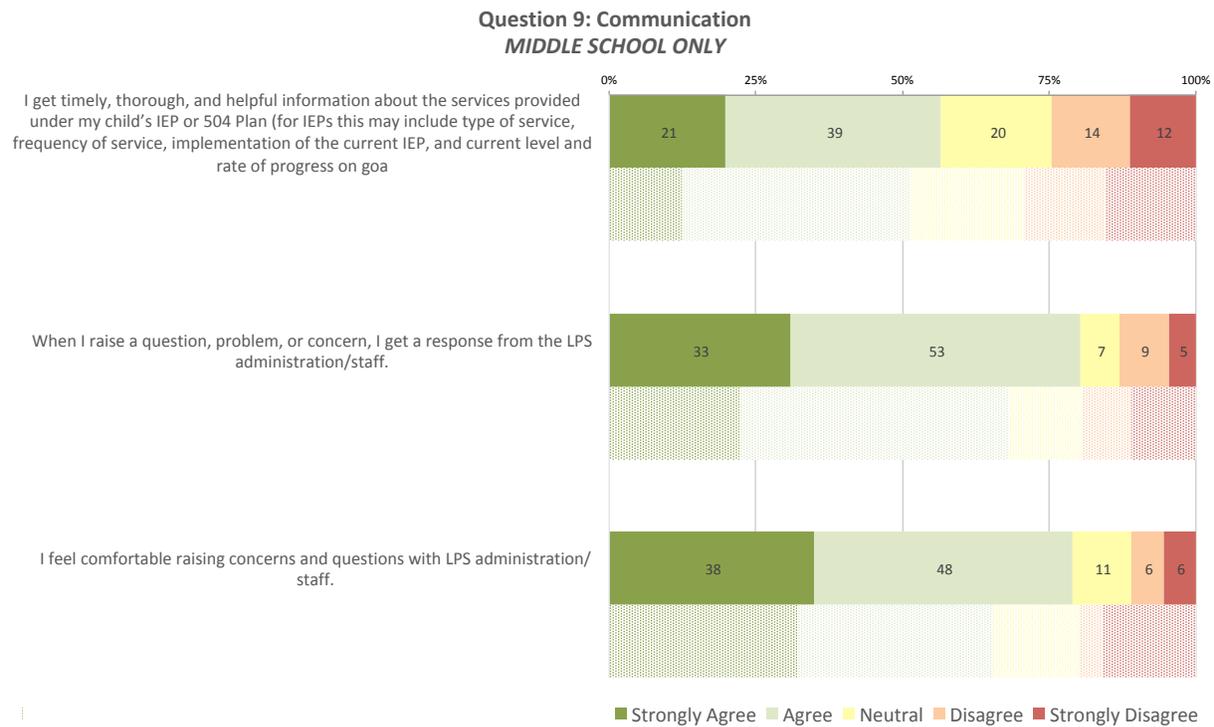
	Negative Response			Positive Response		
	2019	2012	Change	2019	2012	Change
I get timely, thorough, and helpful information about the services provided under my child's IEP or 504 Plan (for IEPs this may include type of service, frequency of service, implementation of the current IEP, and current level and rate of progress on goals.)	20%	23%	-3%	64%	53%	11%
When I raise a question, problem, or concern, I get a response from the LPS administration/staff.	10%	12%	-2%	82%	71%	11%
I feel comfortable raising concerns and questions with LPS administration/staff.	11%	19%	-7%	84%	67%	17%

In looking at these results by school level, we again saw the highest overall satisfaction rates at the elementary school level. Parents are comfortable raising questions/concerns and are pleased with staff/administration response rates, evidenced by the positive (Agree or Strongly Agree) response rates of 84% (125) and 82% (119), respectively. Parents of elementary school students are less satisfied with the general communication around their child, as only

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64% (94) of respondents gave a positive response (Agree or Strongly Agree) to the statement “I get timely, thorough, and helpful information about the services provided under my child’s IEP or 504 Plan,” and 20% (29) of parents gave a negative (Disagree or Strongly Disagree) response.

Graph 42: Communication with Respondents with Middle School Children



Graph 43: Communication with Respondents with Middle School Children Positive Versus Negative Response Rates

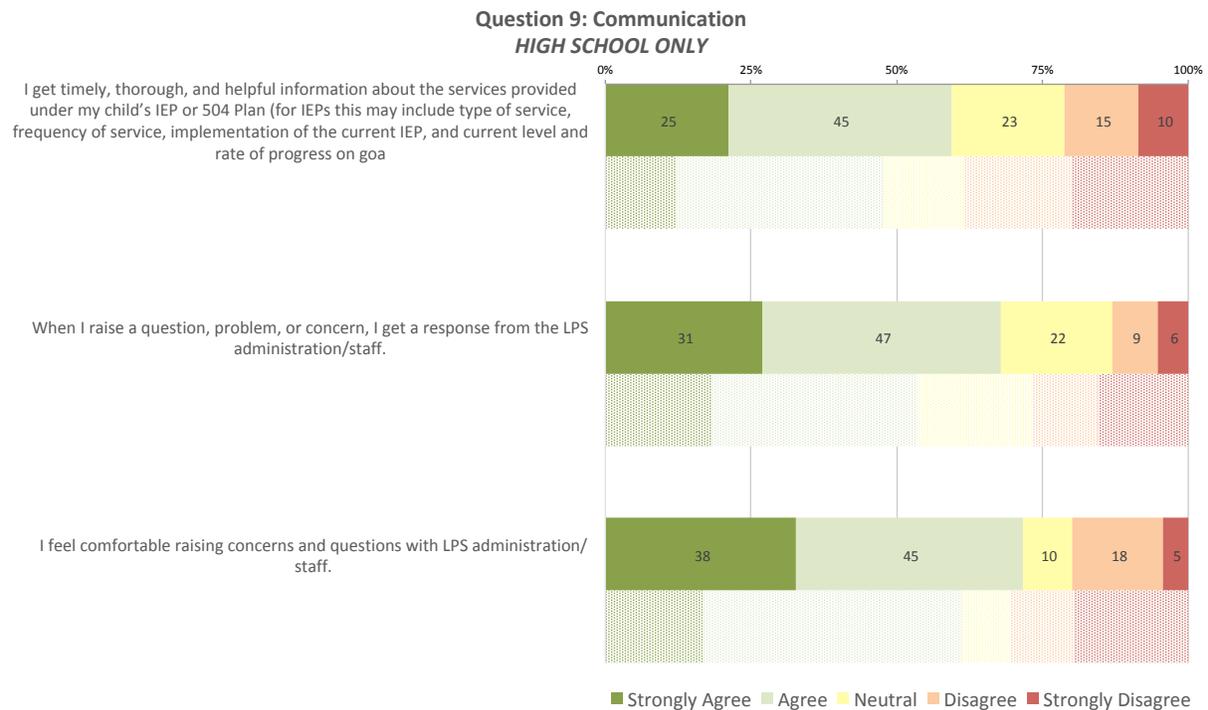
	Negative Response			Positive Response		
	2019	2012	Change	2019	2012	Change
I get timely, thorough, and helpful information about the services provided under my child’s IEP or 504 Plan (for IEPs this may include type of service, frequency of service, implementation of the current IEP, and current level and rate of progress on goals.)	25%	29%	-5%	57%	51%	5%
When I raise a question, problem, or concern, I get a response from the LPS administration/staff.	13%	19%	-6%	80%	68%	12%
I feel comfortable raising concerns and questions with LPS administration/staff.	11%	20%	-9%	79%	65%	14%

Responses from middle school parents regarding Communication mirrored the elementary school results. 80% (86) of parents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they get a response from

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staff when they raise a concern, and 79% (86) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they are comfortable raising concerns with LPS administration/staff. Middle school parents also desire more timely communication regarding their child’s services, as only 57% (60) Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they get timely and helpful information about the services provided under their child’s IEP or 504 Plan, and 25% (26) Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed.

Graph 44: Communication with Respondents with High School Children



Graph 45: Communication with Respondents with High School Children Positive Versus Negative Response Rates

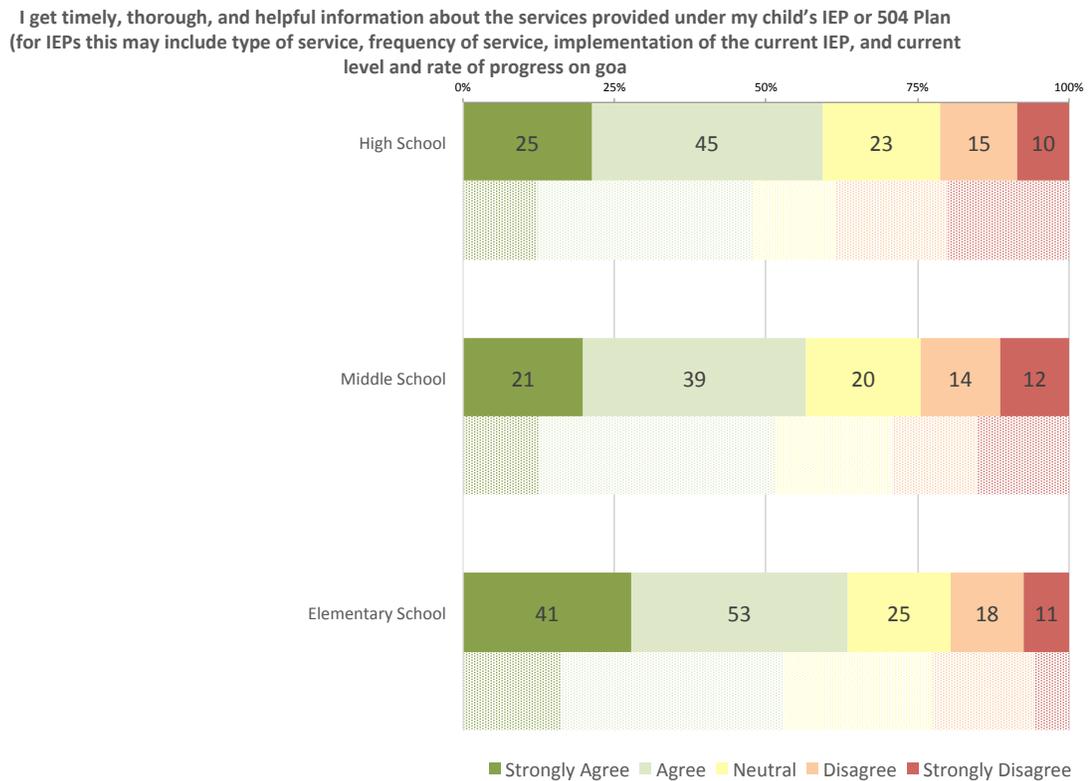
	Negative Response			Positive Response		
	2019	2012	Change	2019	2012	Change
I get timely, thorough, and helpful information about the services provided under my child’s IEP or 504 Plan (for IEPs this may include type of service, frequency of service, implementation of the current IEP, and current level and rate of progress on goals.)	21%	38%	-17%	59%	48%	12%
When I raise a question, problem, or concern, I get a response from the LPS administration/staff.	13%	27%	-14%	68%	54%	14%
I feel comfortable raising concerns and questions with LPS administration/staff.	20%	31%	-11%	72%	61%	10%

While parent feelings around Communication were fairly consistent at both the elementary and middle school levels, parents at the high school reported lower satisfaction rates in these

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categories. 59% (70) of respondents felt they received timely and helpful information about the services their child receives, and 21% (25) Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed. When it comes to questions, 68% (78) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they get a response from LPS administration/staff when they raise a question. 72% (83) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they felt comfortable raising a question or concern, and 20% (23) of respondents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed.

Graph 46: I get timely, thorough, and helpful information about the services provided under my child’s IEP or 504 Plan (School Level)

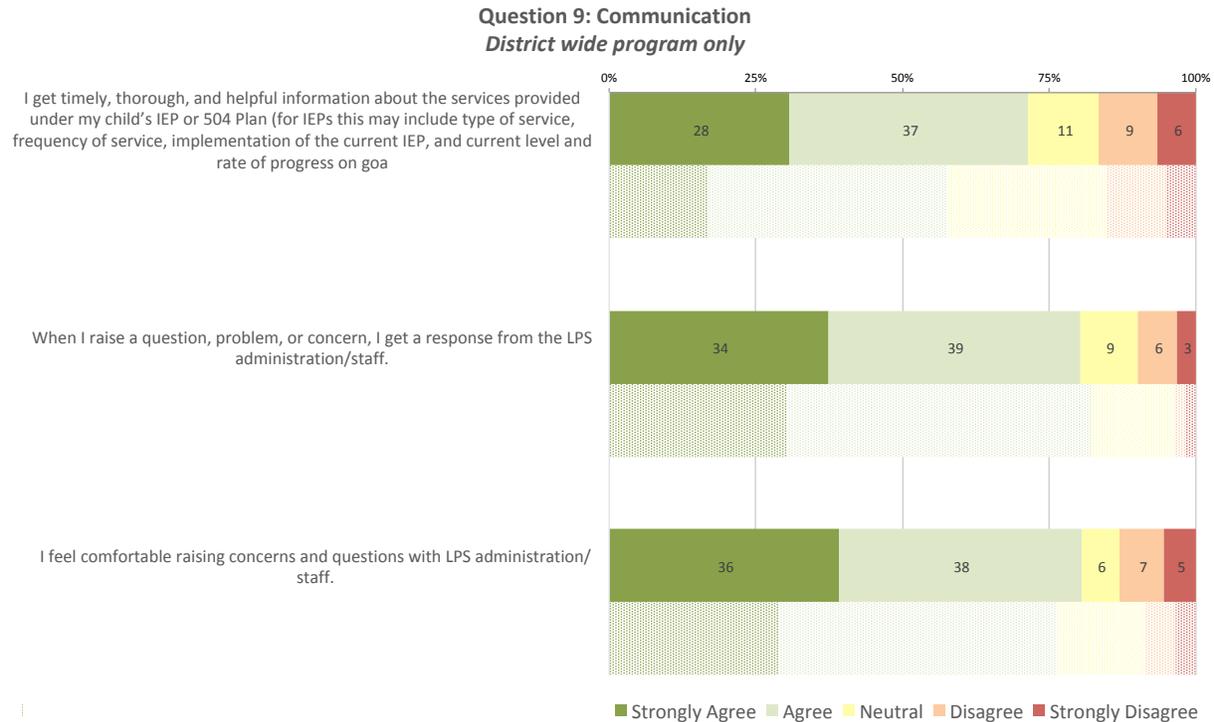


Particularly of note as we look across schools is parents’ consistent desire for more timely and helpful information about the services provided within the IEP or 504 Plan. Positive (Agree or Strongly Agree) responses to this statement did not rise above 64%, and negative (Disagree or Strongly Disagree) responses were at or above 20% at all school levels.

SURVEY RESULTS

QUANTITATIVE DATA BY PROGRAM PLACEMENT

Graph 47: Communication with Respondents with Children in District-wide Programs



Graph 48: Communication with Respondents with Children in District-wide Programs
Positive Versus Negative Response Rates

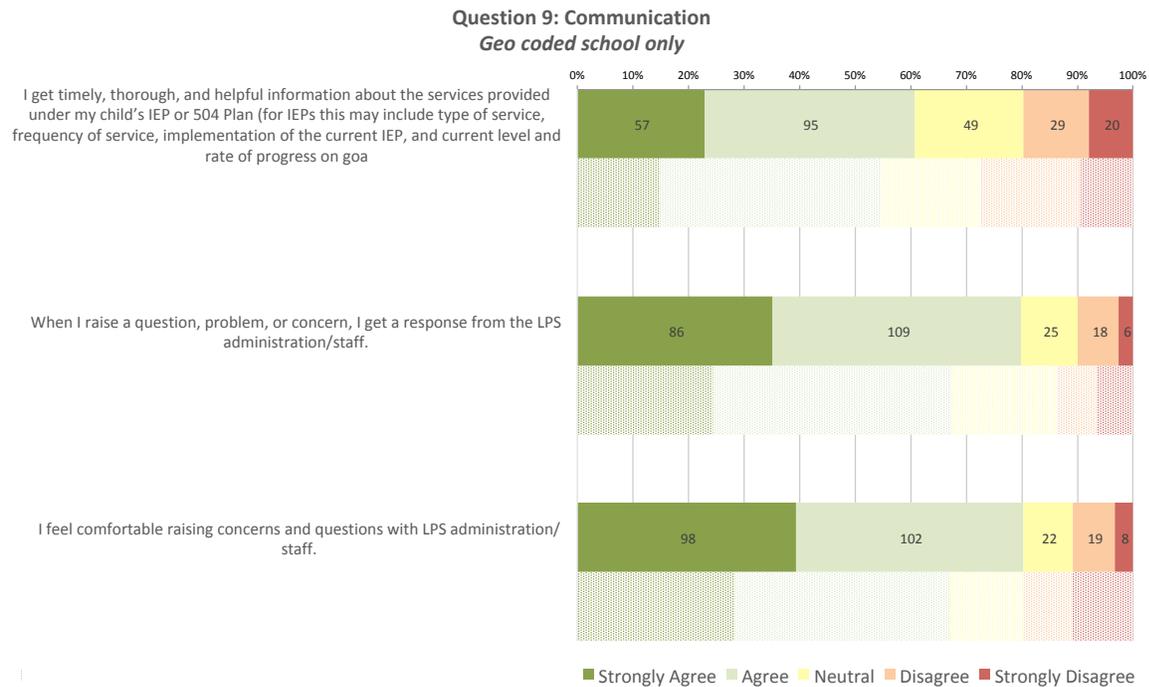
	Negative Response			Positive Response		
	2019	2012	Change	2019	2012	Change
I get timely, thorough, and helpful information about the services provided under my child's IEP or 504 Plan (for IEPs this may include type of service, frequency of service, implementation of the current IEP, and current level and rate of progress on goals.)	16%	15%	1%	71%	58%	14%
When I raise a question, problem, or concern, I get a response from the LPS administration/staff.	10%	4%	6%	80%	82%	-2%
I feel comfortable raising concerns and questions with LPS administration/staff.	13%	8%	5%	80%	76%	4%

Within the district-wide programs, parents are currently quite happy with their communication with LPS administration and staff. 71% (65) of parents with a child in a district-wide program Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they get timely, thorough, and helpful information about the services provided under their child's IEP or 504 Plan. Parents in district-wide programs are receiving responses to their questions and are comfortable raising

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concerns, as 80% (73) of respondents Agree or Strongly Agree that they get a response after raising a question or concern and 80% (74) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they felt comfortable raising questions and concerns. It is worth highlighting that while negative (Disagree or Strongly Disagree) response rates to these questions remain low at 16% (15), 10% (9), and 13% (12), respectively, all three of these results showed an increasing rate of negative response relative to 2012. Therefore, while parents of children in district-wide programs remain overall satisfied with their communications with staff, the level of dissatisfaction has increased in all categories.

Graph 49: Communication with Respondents with Children in Geo-coded Schools



Graph 50: Communication with Respondents with Children in Geo-coded Schools Positive Versus Negative Response Rates

	Negative Response			Positive Response		
	2019	2012	Change	2019	2012	Change
I get timely, thorough, and helpful information about the services provided under my child's IEP or 504 Plan (for IEPs this may include type of service, frequency of service, implementation of the current IEP, and current level and rate of progress on goals.)	20%	27%	-8%	61%	55%	6%
When I raise a question, problem, or concern, I get a response from the LPS administration/staff.	10%	14%	-4%	80%	68%	12%
I feel comfortable raising concerns and questions with LPS administration/staff.	11%	20%	-9%	80%	67%	13%

SURVEY RESULTS

Parents of children on IEPs or 504 Plans who attend their geo-coded (neighborhood) school are also generally pleased with their communications with the school. Here, as well, we saw 80% (195) of respondents Agree or Strongly Agree that they receive a response from LPS administration/staff when they raise a question or concern. 80% (200) of respondents also feel comfortable raising concerns or questions.

Where parents with children attending their geo-coded school differ from parents with children in district-wide programs is on timely communication around service delivery. Here, only 61% of respondents gave a positive (Agree or Strongly Agree) response to the statement “I get timely, thorough, and helpful information about the services provided under my child’s IEP or 504 Plan,” and 20% (27) gave a negative (Disagree or Strongly Disagree) response.

PARENT COMMENTS

Some parents are satisfied with the communication they receive from their student’s special education teachers, with comments such as “responses were very timely and encouraging even when I wasn’t sure if I should bother them with a question/concern,” and “there is always an open door of communication with our child’s team. They respond quickly to concerns and/or new information as it comes up.” Communication at the middle school level appears particularly strong, with multiple comments specifically mentioning positive experiences with middle school staff.

While parents had positive feedback regarding special education staff communication, there were criticisms of general education staff response rates. One parent stated, “The SPED staff responds quickly. The general education staff responds but they often do not have answers and sometimes they never find the answers.” Another respondent says, “Usually the SPED department does give me good assistance, my issue is with the general ed staff.”

Parent concerns around Communication fell into three broad categories. First, parents feel school-driven communication about their child is too infrequent, and that this often feels like a missed opportunity to course correct earlier in the school year. One parent stated, “Twice a year reports do not give timely information on goal progress. Parents do not need reports that are that long, but they should be at least quarterly.” Another parent stated, “Often times teachers say that they are too busy to have a meeting or respond to emails and prefer to

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defer conversations about questions, problems or concerns until conferences or after report cards.”

Second, parents feel staff is reluctant to reach out to them, resulting in parents being responsible for engagement. We saw similar themes in these comments as appeared in Question 8 around parental input being under-appreciated. One parent stated, “I feel that parent communication is seen as a burden by staff. Most staff will answer emails when asked a direct question but it is infrequent to receive proactive communication from staff—I’m not sure if that is because they feel that they don’t have time or if they truly do not see the value in doing so. Parents are valuable partners in their children’s education and I wish staff would see them as such.” Another parent stated, “I have been satisfied with the level of communication LPS has provided. But I am also not afraid to raise questions and follow-up. Most of the time I am initiating the conversation, not the other way around. It is very rare to have an educator ask me a question about if we are having similar problems at home or how we handle it. Which is a waste, as we parents often see the same problems at home and might have insights to provide. I fear the educators feel like they must have all the answers—which is an unreasonable expectation for anyone. I would much rather have an open dialogue with my child’s educators with the understanding that we are a team and can troubleshoot together to find the best solution.”

Finally, there were several comments that indicated parents are not comfortable raising questions/concerns with LPS staff. While the number of these comments was relatively small, given that the IEP process cannot be successful without parents feeling comfortable at the table, these comments need to be highlighted. Comments included: “No we don’t feel comfortable. When we bring up concerns there is a tendency for the process to become unduly adversarial.” “Many times we have felt intimidated to raise issues or ask questions of LPS administration.” “I fear that if I ask too many questions, the placement will be jeopardized.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

Create guidelines for all service providers (Liaisons, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Speech Language Pathologists, etc) to introduce themselves to families at the start of each school year.

SURVEY RESULTS

Encourage all staff, including service providers, that whenever possible parent / guardian communications should receive a response within 1-2 school working days.

SURVEY RESULTS

What aspects of special education in the district do you think are the most effective for your child's development? (Question 10)

Our last three survey questions were open-ended. Question 10 asked parents to let us know their thoughts on what was effective about special education in Lexington Public Schools. We received 205 comments in this section. Common themes from parent feedback to this question included:

- Quality of staff
- Quantity and breadth of services offered
- Appreciation for Resource/Support/WIN blocks
- Value of Inclusion
- Expertise provided in District-wide programs

Throughout the survey parents highlighted their appreciation for the quality of the special education staff, and it was one of the most common themes in the comment sections. Parent appreciation for staff was across school levels and placement location. An elementary parent commented, “The special education teachers and specialists are very caring and truly want to help my child. They seem personally invested in my child’s success and want to go the extra mile to help my child succeed”. One middle school parent stated that the most effective aspect of their child’s development was, “the professionalism of the middle school staff. They work hard to make sure the IEP goals and directives are being followed and communicate well with parents and other staff.” One high school parent commented, “My child attends LHS and works with a resource center advisor. This person has been a real advocate for my child and has been instrumental in the progress my child has made at LHS.”

The breadth of services offered was also frequently cited as one of the most effective aspects of special education at Lexington Public Schools. One parent summed up the positive feedback when saying, “Lexington has not been afraid to put resources behind special education, and for that we’re unbelievably grateful. We are very lucky to have so many resources: caring, well-trained teachers with low ratios; aides; and extra specialists and supports like ACC and assistive tech. I’ve never doubted Lexington’s commitment to special education.”

SURVEY RESULTS

Parents consistently cited the dedicated Resource/Support/WIN (“What I Need”) blocks as being extremely beneficial to their children. A parent of an elementary school student indicated, “I think my child benefits from the push-in services provided by special education support staff as well as the opportunity to access additional supports during WIN blocks.” One high school parent stated, “Our child has a resource block most days of the week in high school. This is extremely important and has allowed our child to feel comfortable with academic requirements.” In tandem with the Resource blocks, parents highly valued the small group and one-on-one instruction that these dedicated time blocks allow for. We had over 40 individual responses to this question that referenced the effectiveness of one-on-one instruction, small group instruction, or access to resource room support.

The value of inclusion time with the general education classrooms was also a common theme throughout the comments for this question. One parent stated, “The opportunity to participate in an inclusive classroom with an aide has probably been the most beneficial aspect of the current special education setup.” Another parent echoed this sentiment, stating “I think providing an inclusive (non-segregated) environment is the most important thing for my child.”

Finally, there was consistent support for the expertise provided in the district-wide programs. Since we did not ask parents to specify which district-wide program their child attended, we are unable to ascertain if the positive feedback is broad-based or specific to certain programs. One parent stated, “The district-wide program has been transformative for my child. The in-class help, behavioral support, OT and speech and language team are wonderful!” Another parent commented, “My child is in the right program; just what my student needs.”

SURVEY RESULTS

What are one or two changes to special education that could be made to better meet the needs of your child? (Question 11)

The next question of the survey asked parents to give their opinion on what changes could be made to best meet their child's needs. We received 193 responses to this question, and saw the most robust responses of the survey. The common themes focused on:

- A desire to improve the sometimes adversarial relationship between the parents, staff, and the administration
- A need for more frequent communication and progress updates
- A strong belief in meaningful inclusion, including being less dogmatic around program offerings and more mindful around student disruptions when scheduling services
- Frustration on general education staff's reliance on self-advocacy
- More training for general education staff around IEP laws, common disabilities, and differentiated instruction
- More staff education around disability categories and proactive identification of learning disabilities
- More executive function supports
- An eagerness for best practices to be shared across schools

One of the most frequent areas for improvement mentioned was improving the relationship between parents, staff, and the administration. First, parents feel that their insights are not always properly considered. One parent stated, "The very most important thing that I think should change is the attitude amongst staff regarding parental involvement and participation in special education. Parental participation is one of the most important aspects of IDEA, yet parents continue to feel that their opinions and viewpoints don't matter at team meetings." Second, parents sense that staff does not always feel comfortable giving their opinions. One parent stated, "I have had conversations with teachers and special education staff that were 'off the record' per the staff's apprehension to bring up issues with a child with other departments, let alone in an IEP meeting...How much sooner would my child's needs have been raised if the teacher had felt free to speak up in IEP meetings instead of putting the burden on parents to advocate?"

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As was consistent in the quantitative data and the qualitative feedback, parents have a high desire for more frequent communication with staff around their child's progress. One parent suggested, "I would find it very reassuring to receive quarterly updates from the guidance counselor or teacher on how my child is doing in general so that I can know if I need to support my student better at home." Another parent stated, "I think more frequent meetings between staff and parents would be helpful. Just checking in at the beginning of the year or end of year doesn't feel like enough check-ins. Who is otherwise checking in mid-year to make sure that appropriate accommodations and progress is being made? It is not enough to write down the accommodations but to ensure that the individual student is actually progressing towards their best self or otherwise improving in areas that are needing the accommodation."

Parents highlighted a desire for more inclusion opportunities in this section, as well. Parents believe the district has become too married to program silos at the expense of individualization, socialization, and flexibility. One parent stated, "Special Ed in Lexington is too rigid. There are specific programs targeted for specific disabilities and it is impossible to go outside of these boundaries when a child has differing needs or needs a hybrid of services. I feel my child has suffered and is not meeting their full potential, academically or socially, because of this." Another parent said, "I think the program-based model in many cases has morphed into an exclusionary model where inclusion is an afterthought and often not compatible with how the program has been set up. There needs to be a mindset change, driven from the top, that all children should be educated in the general education setting. And if they cannot, how to get them back into their gen-ed classroom should be the first topic at every IEP meeting. Even if special education teachers are on board, a more inclusive model won't work without gen-ed teachers taking ownership of the special education students in their class, and the specialized therapists (OT/PT/Speech/etc) embracing push-in therapies as the first option, with pull-outs used only after push-ins have failed." When asked what could be improved, one parent stated, "if my child could learn with peers. I feel like efforts are being made in my child's classroom to improve on this but over the years my child has spent most of their time with adults."

Parents consistently indicated that staff relies on student self-advocacy to remind staff to provide accommodations. This practice singles out students and has self-esteem and mental health repercussions for an already at-risk population. One parent stated, "Teachers need to

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be reminded that there is a 504 plan and it is not clear when would be the best time to do this so there is no awkward moment during a test when a child has to ask for extra time and the teacher asking if they have a 504 before agreeing to the extension of time.” Another parent stated, “Self-advocacy is a great goal, but some kids on IEPs might not know what their allowed accommodations are or have the skills to push for them if the teachers are not providing them.” A third said, “All teachers must read carefully and adhere to the IEP. It is not solely the onus of the student to implement the IEP accommodations under an authoritarian figure like a teacher. Teachers should be teaching with every intention of understanding and assisting a student’s IEP goals, not just ignoring them or assuming that is the job of resource staff and the student.”

In a similar vein, parents strongly advocated for more staff training around the laws governing IEPs and 504 Plans, especially for general education staff. One parent suggested, “The first change is to train general education staff to understand that the IEP is not a suggestion but a legal document.” Another parent recommended, “School needs to make sure that ALL staff (classroom teachers as well as specials teachers) are familiar with and implementing the 504 plans and IEPs.” Another stated, “My conversations with both staff and special education administrators over the years have revealed an inexcusable lack of knowledge about the IEP process and the law—it is negligent for the special education department to continue to allow IEP teams to be run and operate in such a way that basic laws and regulations are not being followed...Training of all staff and administrators in the IEP process should occur immediately and would be an excellent idea for professional development.”

There were several other areas where parents desired more professional development for staff, particularly general education staff. First, several parents recommended general education staff receive training on best practices for broad disability categories. One parent said they desired “better training and support for the general education teachers so they can better understand the challenges of the special education students.” Another suggested: “Make SPED training mandatory for every staff member to at least train them on most common disabilities, and how disabilities impact children’s behavior.” Training around how disability can impact behavior was a common theme. One parent stated, “I feel that the teacher doesn’t do what the 504 plan says and blamed my child for being stubborn even though the disability is the problem. I am afraid that if I push further the teacher will take it out on my child.” Another parent indicated, “Too much emphasis is placed on behavior

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management instead of understanding the underlying social emotional issues.” Another area highlighted for additional professional development was around language-based learning disabilities. Several parents indicated a desire for more Orton-Gillingham certified staff. Others pressed for more robust early screening for dyslexia. Finally, a number of parents suggested a curriculum review with learning disabilities in mind, stating “Look at all of the language curriculum through the eyes of a student with language-based learning disabilities, dyslexia and then modify it so they can effectively access it.”

The need for executive function skills training for their children appeared many times throughout these comments. One parent summarized the concern this way: “Executive Functioning affects many children across many disability types. Currently LPS has very little, scattered, and varied support in this area.”

Parents acknowledged that there are many innovative and successful strategies being used throughout Lexington Public Schools, but that they don’t always seem to be shared across all schools. One parent summarized it as, “Best practices should be shared between programs...some children in Special Ed have multiple issues and would benefit if the teams at their schools could get insights from teams at other schools who might have more experience with their secondary disability. Also, I feel that parents at some schools are really angered when they learn that their children aren’t getting as high a level of service as children at other schools. Educators should understand that parents know there is a disparity and should look for opportunities to raise the bar district-wide.”

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Is there anything else you would like us to know? (Question 12)

Our final question was an open-ended question that allowed survey participants to elaborate further on any topics not addressed directly in the survey. We received 117 responses to this question. Many themes echoed what was highlighted in both Questions 10 and 11. Common themes included:

- The aspiration for differentiated instruction, individualization, and flexibility within general education
- A strong desire for early dyslexia screening and acknowledgement of dyslexia as a disability
- Concern over support received by students on ‘moderate’ IEPs within general education (i.e. is not in a District-wide program)
- A desire for more social/emotional and executive function supports
- Student transitions between school levels are particularly challenging
- A sense that the administration and staff are often in conflict
- An appeal for all staff to be trained on the laws governing IEPs

Throughout the survey we’ve seen a strong preference for push-in therapies and for staff to find creative ways to accommodate children within the general education classroom. In that vein, there were several comments in our closing open-ended question related to an aspiration for more differentiated instruction and flexibility within the general education setting. As one parent stated, “Because my student doesn’t quite fit the profile of a special education student, what I’d really like to convey is not about special education but about all education. The cookie cutter approach doesn’t work (as I’m sure you already know). All students don’t learn the same way but our system, especially at the high school level, teaches students all the same way.” Another parent summarized the sentiment by saying, “When a motivated student who has certain learning challenges cannot manage successfully in the LPS system because the system doesn’t know how to teach that student, everyone loses, most especially the student. If the system approached teaching/learning as a collaborative process, and if the teachers especially were trained in more differentiated instruction, that could make a big difference in the lives of students who at present are falling through the cracks.”

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Parents were particularly concerned around the institutionalized barriers that can hinder the success of children with learning disabilities. One parent stated, “LPS is a very challenging learning environment K-12 for kids with learning disabilities, especially dyslexia. The curriculum, fast paced learning environment do not align with how these kids best learn.” Another respondent commented, “It is frustrating not to have the specific services in the schools for dyslexia. It is also frustrating that those services and concepts are not incorporated throughout the curriculum for the children who need the extra support across the general curriculum.” Others emphasized the need for more teacher training to recognize early signs of dyslexia, “I also find that many teachers are unaware or under educated about dyslexia. I wish the school district educated everyone about the spectrum of this learning disability and the ways to red flag it early.”

Parents also used this question to highlight their trepidation around LPS’s commitment to children with moderate special education needs. As one parent stated, “I understand that the amount of children in the district now needing extreme specialized support is increasing. However, Lexington should not forget those other students that may not have severe needs but still need support.” Relatedly, parents also used this comment opportunity to again highlight the need for more social/emotional and executive function supports. One parent stated, “A lot of students with disabilities are struggling with social and emotional needs. We need to do a better job of supporting those students...Having workshops where executive function skills are taught would also benefit all students.” Another parent recommended, “Perhaps staff need some training on how to support social-emotional difficulties. And they definitely need some training on how to support a child’s executive function skills.”

Parents also used this section to alert us to a sense that the staff and administration are often in conflict. One parent stated, “In general, we have been very impressed with and grateful to individual teachers. It saddens us to experience Lexington as an environment where those teachers are limited in their effectiveness because of fears from their administrators. If cost is their fear, then, ultimately, the cost is made higher by delaying intervention that could move the student toward real progress and greater independence.” Another parent commented, “There is frequently a sense that parents are expected to infer meaning behind staff comments as if they are not able to speak freely and it is hard as a parent to trust they are saying what they really think/feel vs. what an administrator is supporting.”

SURVEY RESULTS

The strong desire for more staff education around the laws governing the IEP process continued to be mentioned here, as well. Several parents detailed past experiences where the IEP process wasn't followed. One parent offered this recommendation: "The town should provide training to IEP teams about a student's civil rights, LRE, FAPE, ADA, and IDEA. Parents shouldn't have to be educating the staff on these materials. It should be the other way around!" Another parent suggested an ombudsman-like arrangement might be worth exploring, stating, "Is there a way for parents to anonymously report concerns about teachers who do not follow the IEP? I don't want to be that parent who complains but there are a few teachers who refuse to follow the IEP and there is nothing I can do about it. My child does not want me to complain because my child does not want to be seen as more difficult but it has taken a toll on my child's self esteem and grades. There should be checks by somebody to see if teachers are really following the IEP and training or something else for teachers who don't want to follow the IEP or think that the IEP is just a suggestion."

CONCLUSION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CONCLUSION

Special education programs in Lexington, and all public schools, must balance many competing interests—special education laws and regulations, resource and budgetary constraints, and parents’ expectations for an appropriate education for their children. At stake is the educational success of students with special needs as well as the time, energy, and emotions of all involved. The Lexington SEPAC/SEPTA seeks to help balance these needs by fostering collaboration and communication with LPS professionals and parents.

The goal of the 2019 SEPAC Parent Survey was to better understand the perspectives of parents of children with special needs regarding their children’s services and care, parent-staff collaboration, and communication. With response rates above 30% in all categories, we are confident that this survey captures a valid snapshot of parent opinions that can be used to inform and prioritize SEPAC/SEPTA and LPS efforts, and further inform the District’s ongoing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work. SEPAC/SEPTA looks forward to further cooperation and research on this topic, but most importantly to the actions that will continue to improve special education in Lexington.

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survey and provided detailed comments that gave us the information we needed to better understand parent viewpoints, student needs, and areas both of and for improvement.