

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

LEXINGTON SEPAC/SEPTA PARENT SURVEY REPORT

APRIL 8, 2013

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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)) and 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 to better manage its funds and also gives the PAC a seat at the PTA table.

By-laws for both the Lexington SEPAC and SEPTA can be found at our Web site:
www.lexspac.org.

This survey was conducted as an informal, web-based poll for the convenience of the Survey Team and the respondents. 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.

Background

The November 2012 SEPAC Parent Survey was launched as a result of discussions at the September 20, 2012 SEPAC and School Committee meetings. Both of these meetings were held to discuss concerns regarding the behavioral intervention strategies used with students with special needs. At these meetings, several other parents of students in Lexington's special education programs raised concerns. Superintendent Dr. Paul Ash, School Committee members, and the Lexington SEPAC/SEPTA agreed that a survey to better understand parent perspectives on Lexington Special Education would help guide further discussions.

The Lexington SEPAC/SEPTA, in partnership with Lexington Public Schools and the School Committee, began work on the survey in early October 2012. Target respondents included parents of children with an IEP or 504 Plan in Lexington Public Schools currently or within the last two years, or parents of children who had applied but were not found eligible for special education services. The survey sought to better understand parent satisfaction with:

- Special Education/504 service delivery
- Communication
- Parent partnership efforts
- Use of behavioral management strategies

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.

Methodology

The SEPAC/SEPTA worked with the School Committee and Lexington Public Schools on the best way to approach the survey creation and data compilation/analysis process, with the understanding that launching the survey quickly would be a critical success factor. The SEPAC/SEPTA considered hiring an outside survey company to do this work, but determined that the costs would be prohibitive, and the hiring process might slow the process. The SEPAC/SEPTA also considered working with Lexington Public Schools to hire an outside survey company, but determined that the RFP process required for this option would mean that the survey might not be launched until winter of 2013. There was also a concern that parents desiring anonymity may not respond to a survey unless it was conducted outside Lexington Public Schools.

In addition, the SEPAC/SEPTA felt that an internal survey could be done well enough to provide valuable input, and that such a survey could form a very strong basis for further work in the case that LPS and/or SEPAC/SEPTA decided to engage an outside firm.

Therefore, the Lexington SEPAC/SEPTA decided to form a Survey Team to be responsible for survey creation, survey launch, data compilation and analysis, and survey results report and presentation. As work got underway, the Survey Team reviewed comparable surveys from surrounding towns, (such as Newton and Belmont), and reviewed the questions and results from the Lexington SEPAC March 2012 Parent Survey. The Survey Team also held a focus group with approximately 10 parents of children with special needs in LPS to understand common questions and concerns and to develop appropriate language for the survey.

After a survey draft was created, the Survey Team incorporated feedback and got approval on the survey from:

- Linda Chase (LPS Director of Student Services)
- Diane Pelletier (LPS Interim Director of Special Education)
- Alessandro Alessandrini (SEPAC/SEPTA School Committee liaison)

The Lexington SEPAC/SEPTA launched the online survey on November 13, 2012. The survey was closed on November 27, 2012. Prospective respondents were notified of the survey via

the LPS Global Connect email system (which goes out to all parents with children in LPS), various Lexington LISTSERV® email lists, the SEPAC Web site, and via flyers posted in Lexington.

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.

After the demographic data section, respondents were asked to rate a series of statements on a scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree. Depending on the statement, we also included N/A or Don't Know options.

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

The Survey Team committed to keeping all responses, including comments, anonymous. Comments were not tied to individual responses, and the Survey Team was careful not to ask for 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 improvements efforts.

SURVEY RESULTS

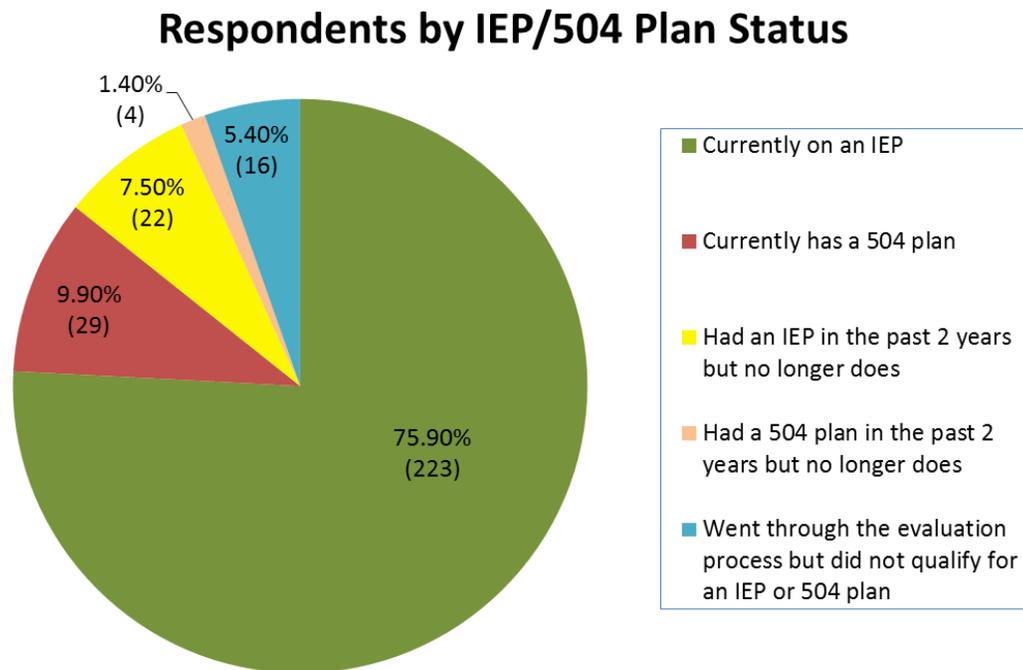
Survey Response Rate and Demographics

A total of 298 parents responded to the survey. Of these respondents, 223 identified themselves as parents of children on an IEP, 29 identified themselves as parents of children on a 504 Plan, 22 parents identified themselves as parents of children who were on an IEP in the last two years, but were no longer on an IEP, 4 identified themselves as parents of children who were on a 504 Plan but were no longer on a 504 Plan, and 16 respondents identified themselves as parents who went through the special education evaluation process but whose children were not found eligible for special education services.

Based on numbers provided by Lexington Public Schools in December 2012, there were 1007 students on an IEP plan. With 223 respondents identifying themselves as parents of children currently on an IEP, we determined a response rate of 22% for this category of respondents. In addition, based on numbers provided by Lexington Public Schools in March of 2013, there were 105 students on 504 Plans. With 29 respondents identifying themselves as parents of students on a 504 Plan, we determined a response rate of 27% for this category of respondents. While we cannot determine response rates for the other categories, the raw numbers indicate that these response rates are lower.

SURVEY RESULTS

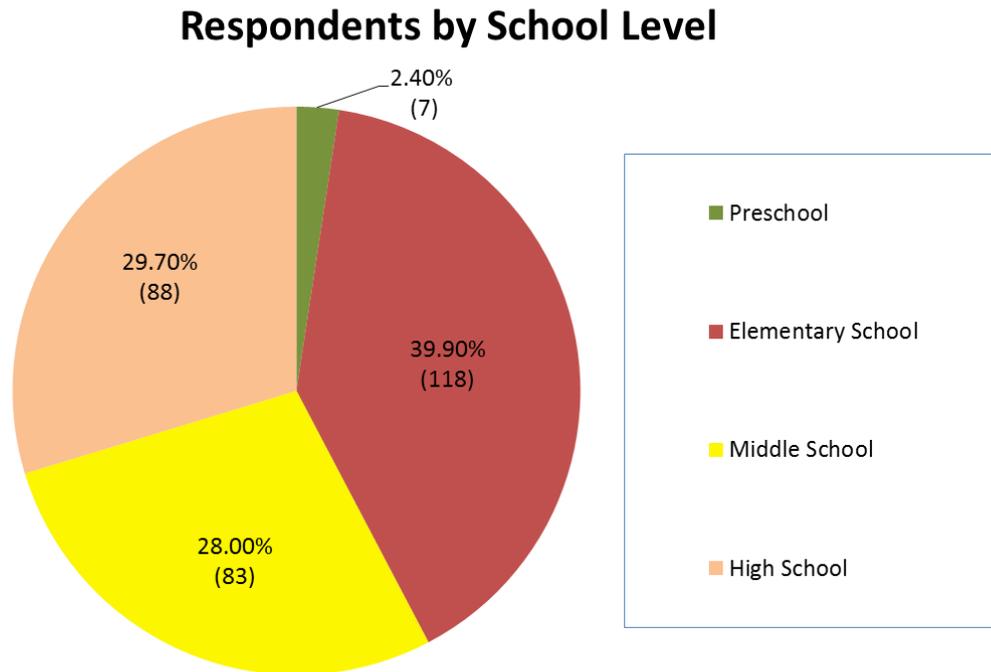
Graph 1: Respondents by IEP/504 Plan Status



The survey also 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 (39.9%, or 118 of the respondents), while the numbers were fairly similar for middle school (28%, 83) and high school (29%, 88). Parents of children in the preschool responded in the smallest numbers, with only 2.4% or 7 respondents.

SURVEY RESULTS

Graph 2: Respondents by School Level

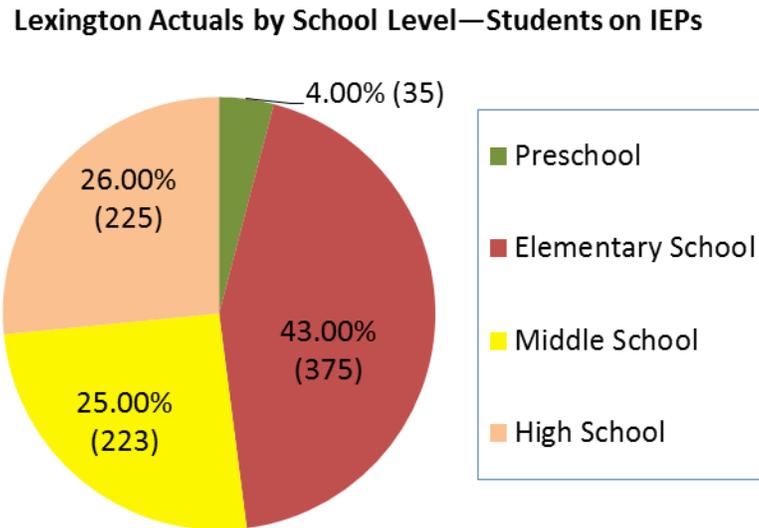


The survey response rates compare favorably to the actual breakdown of students on IEPs by school level based on numbers provided by Lexington Public Schools in February 2013. Based on these numbers, our response rates for students on an IEP are at least 20% for all school levels, as shown in the table below:

SCHOOL LEVEL	RESPONSE RATE
Preschool	20%
Elementary	25%
Middle School	27%
High School	25%

SURVEY RESULTS

Graph 3: Lexington Actuals by School Level (Students on IEPs)

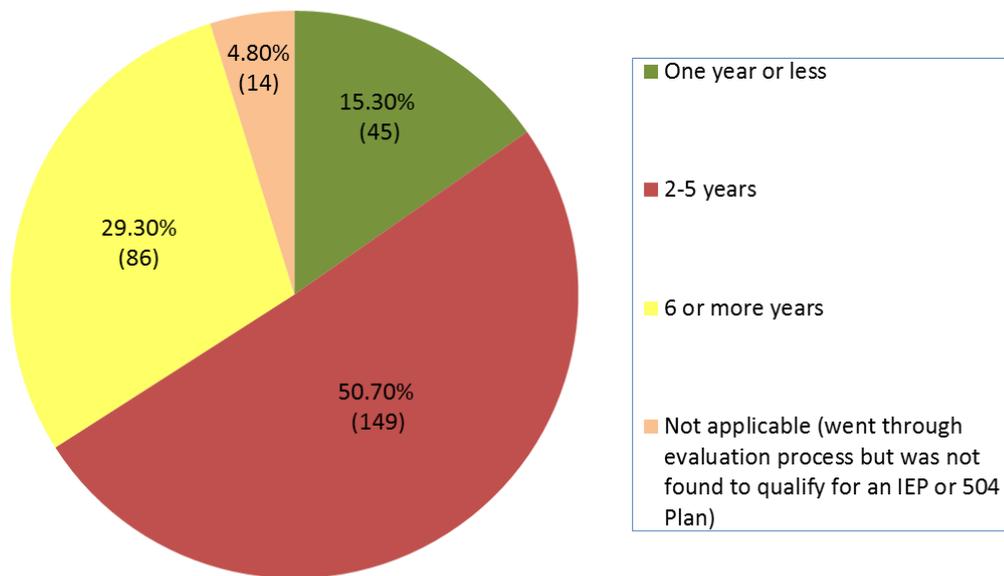


Next, we asked respondents to tell us how long their child had been on an IEP or 504 Plan. Approximately half of respondents (50.7%, 149) have children who have been on an IEP or 504 Plan for 2-5 years, while 29.3% (86) of respondents have children who have been on an IEP or 504 Plan for 6 or more years. Only 15.3% (45) of respondents have children who have been on an IEP plan for one year or less, and 4.8% (14) of respondents have children who went through an evaluation process but were not found to be eligible for an IEP or 504 Plan.

SURVEY RESULTS

Graph 4: Respondents by Length of Time on IEP or 504 Plan

Respondents by Length of Time on IEP or 504 Plan



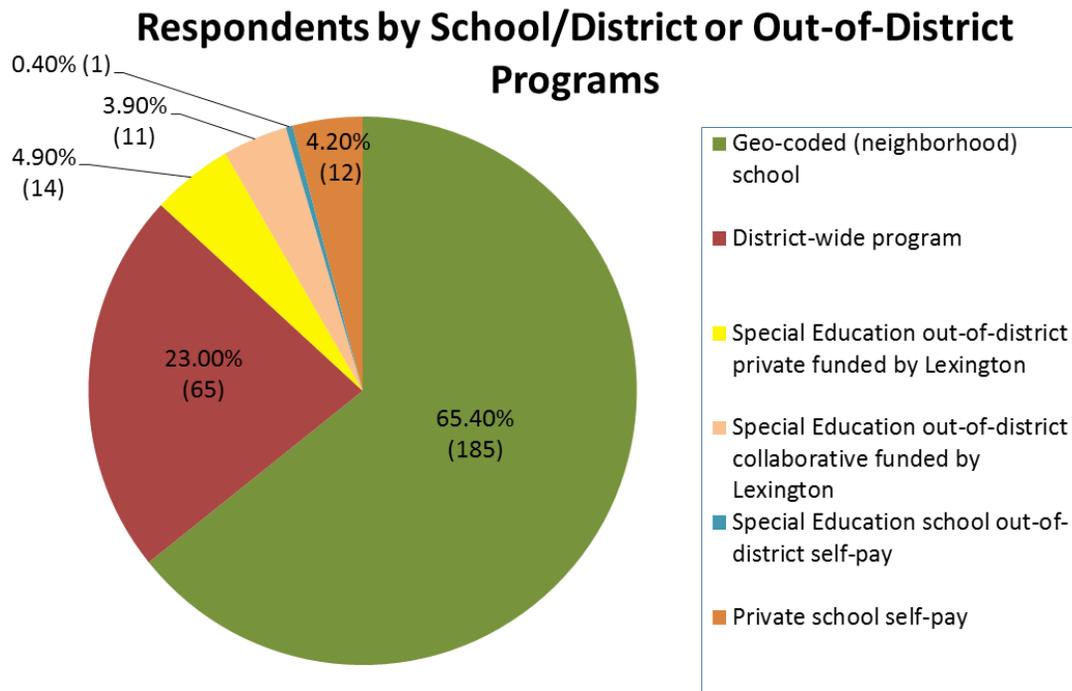
Finally, we asked respondents to provide information about what type of program their children attended. The majority of parents (65.4%, 185) told us their children attended their geo-coded (or neighborhood) school, with 23% (65) of respondents saying their children attended a district-wide program (district-wide 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 children attended an out-of-district school, and to indicate the type of out-of-district program. Overall, 13% (38) of respondents said their

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children attended an out-of-district school. Further breakdown of out-of-district respondent data can be seen in Graph 5 below.

Graph 5: Respondents by School/District or Out-of-District Programs



According to February 2013 numbers, Lexington had 91 students in out-of-district placements funded by Lexington (partially or fully), and 67 students in self-pay private schools, but who were receiving special education services through Lexington Public Schools.

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Parent Comments

Along with 298 quantitative responses, we received 869 parent comments (comments were optional). Because we did not tie the comments back to individual responses, we do not know how many parents are represented by these comments. However, 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 this report where we felt a comment was indicative of a common theme and/or where the comment added detail to the quantitative results.

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Raw Data

You will find the Raw Quantitative Survey Data on the Lexington SEPAC Web site (www.lexsepac.org). The Quantitative Survey Data include all the survey questions asked, as well as the response percentages and counts. 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 the Lexington SEPAC/SEPTA November 2012 Parent Survey Comments. This document has also been posted on the Lexington SEPAC Web site (www.lexsepac.org).

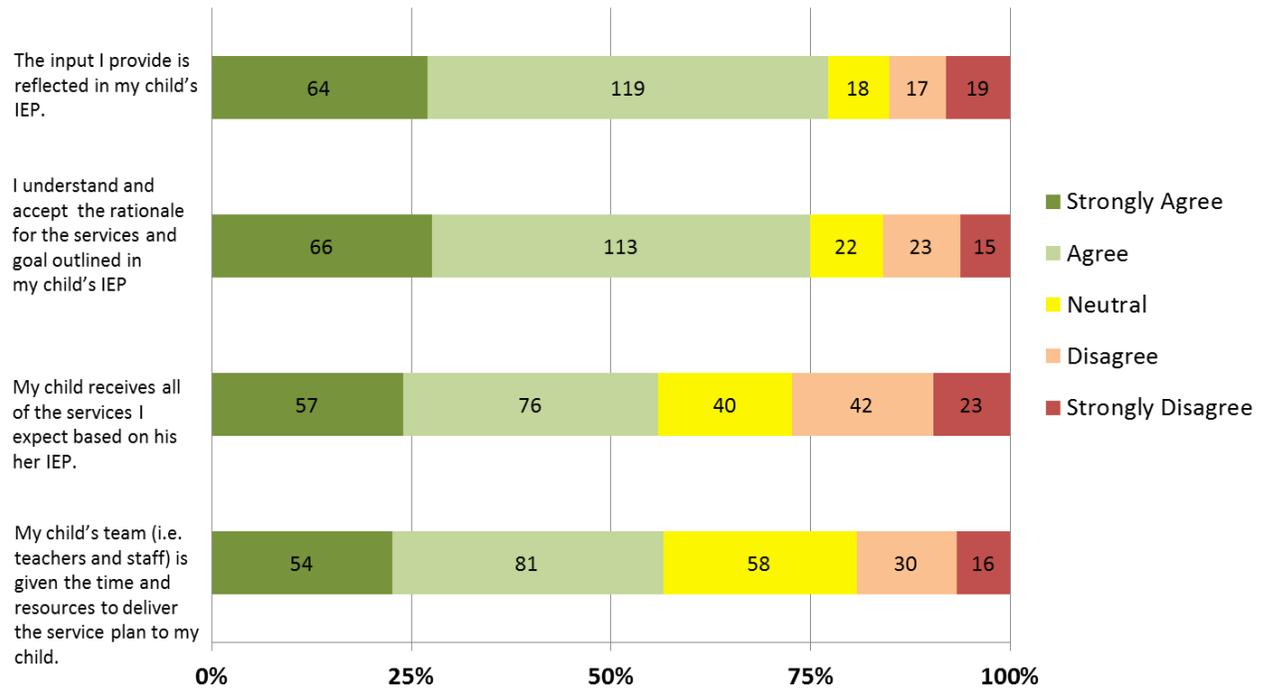
SURVEY RESULTS

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

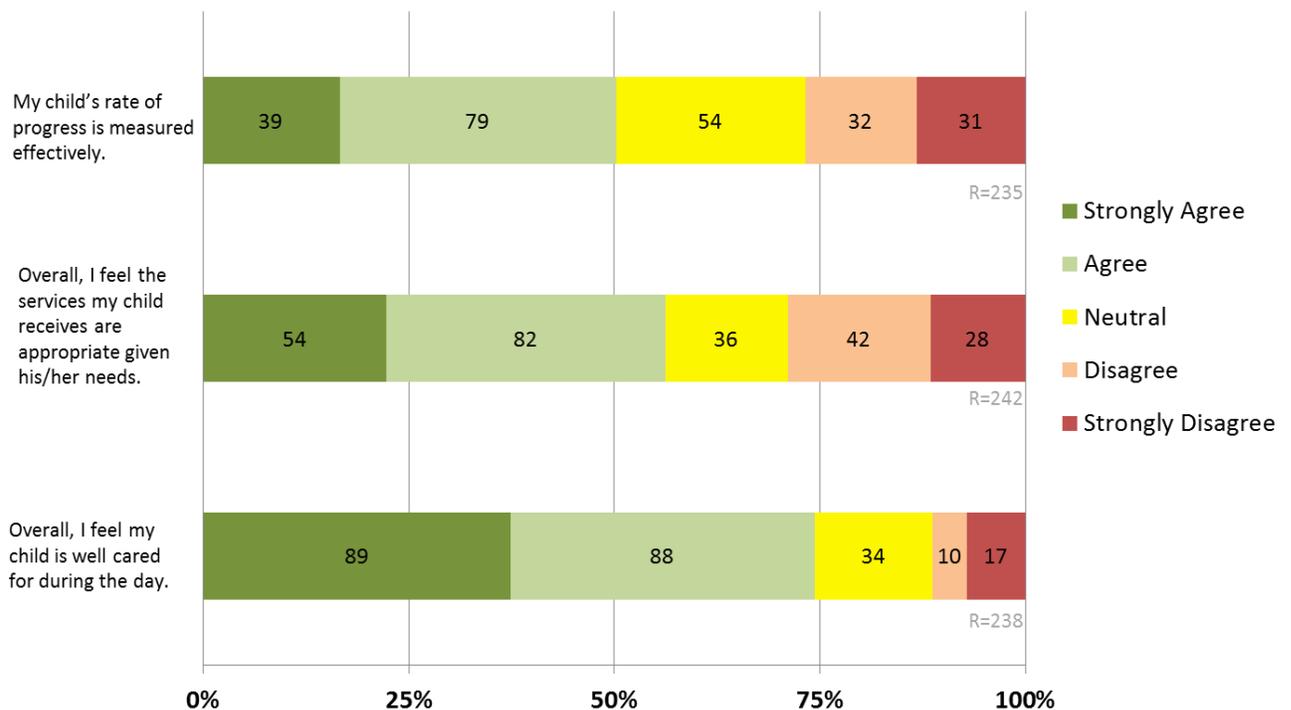
QUANTITATIVE RESULTS—ALL SCHOOL LEVELS

The first set of statements focused on parent satisfaction with the placement and services and goals for children on IEPs, including whether staff are given enough resources, if progress is measured effectively, and if children are well cared for during the school day.

Graph 6: Placement/Services Delivery for Children with an IEP



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This section saw some of the most positive results of the survey. Close to 75% (183) of 245 respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that their input is reflected in their child's IEP. In addition, 72% (179) of 247 respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they could understand the rationale for the services and goals outlined in their child's IEP. These results indicate 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 final IEP.

In addition, 71.6% (177) of 247 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.

Responses to other questions about implementation and monitoring, while still mainly positive, were more mixed. While 53.8% (133) of 247 respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed

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that their child received all the services expected based on the IEP, 16.2% (40) of respondents were Neutral, and 26% (65) of respondents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed with this statement. Similarly, while 55% of 247 respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the services their child received were appropriate given their children's needs, 14% (36) of respondents were Neutral, and 28% (70) of respondents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed. Together, these findings suggest that parents may be more satisfied with IEP creation, but less satisfied with IEP execution.

Other questions in this section provide information about parent perspectives regarding staff resources and rate of progress monitoring. When asked if their child's team was given the time and resources to deliver the service plan to their child, 54% (135) of 248 respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed, but close to a quarter of respondents (23.4% or 58) were Neutral, and 18% (46) Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed.

Respondents gave the measurement of their child's progress the lowest rating in this set of questions. 33% (79) of 245 respondents Agreed that their child's rate of progress was measured effectively, and only 16% (39) of respondents Strongly Agreed with this statement (combined, this is 50% of the total respondents). While for most other statements in this category respondents Disagreed in higher numbers than they Strongly Disagreed, for this statement the numbers were roughly equal (13.6% or 32 respondents Disagreed and 13.1% or 31 respondents Strongly Disagreed). 22.9% (54) respondents were Neutral.

Taken together, the quantitative results for the Placement/Services Delivery for Children with an IEP indicate that parents have particular concerns about whether staff members have enough time and resources to adequately implement the IEP created for their child, and whether their child's progress is adequately monitored to ensure future success.

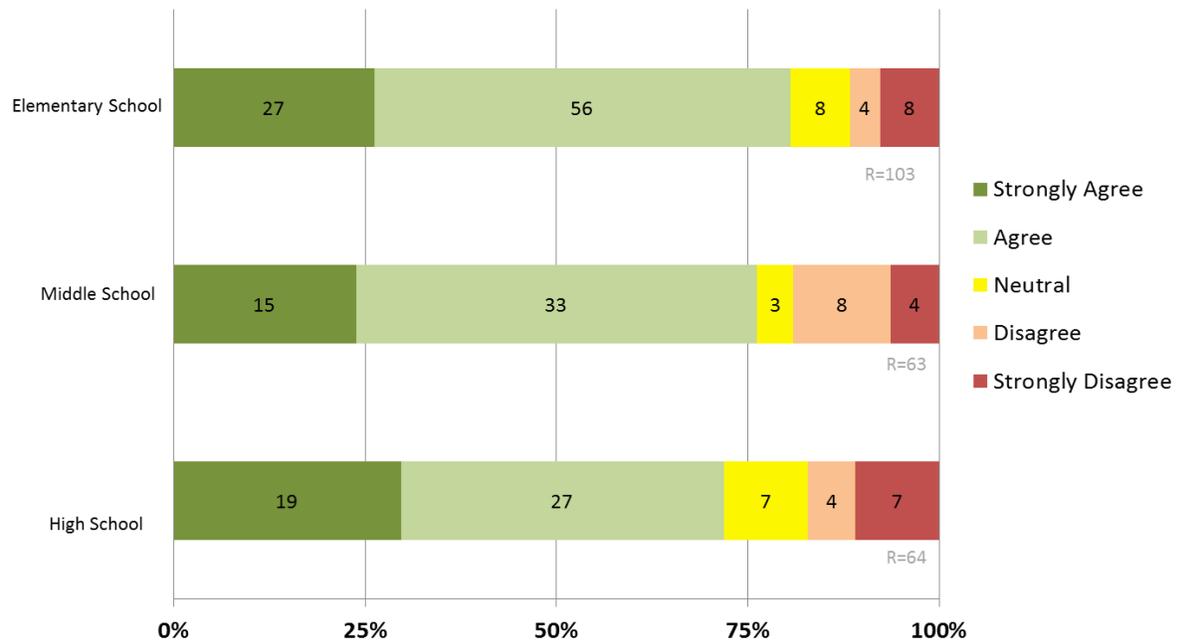
QUANTITATIVE RESULTS BY SCHOOL LEVEL

In looking at the Placement and Service Delivery for students on an IEP results by school level, the common theme is that reported satisfaction rates are highest at the elementary school level. In the first statement, "The input I provide is reflected in my child's IEP," the drop in satisfaction rate from elementary school to middle school to high school was less than 10% -- 80% (83) of elementary school parents Strongly Agreed or Agreed with this statement, while 76% (48) of middle school parents and 71% (46) of high school parents were in these

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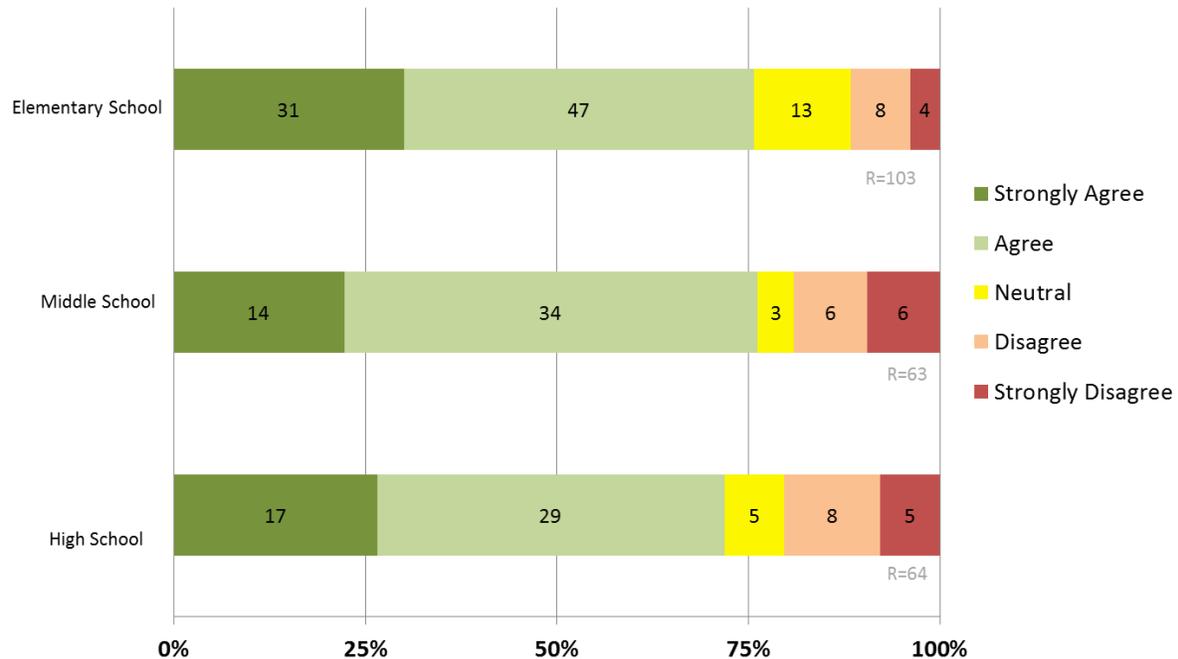
categories. When we looked at the statement “I understand and accept the rationale for the services and goals outlined in my child’s IEP,” the elementary and middle school numbers were similar but there was a decline in satisfaction at the high school level--75% (78) of elementary school parents and 76% (48) of middle school parents Strongly Agreed or Agreed, while 71% (46) of high school parents were in these categories.

Graph 7: The Input I provide is reflected in my child’s IEP (School Level).



SURVEY RESULTS

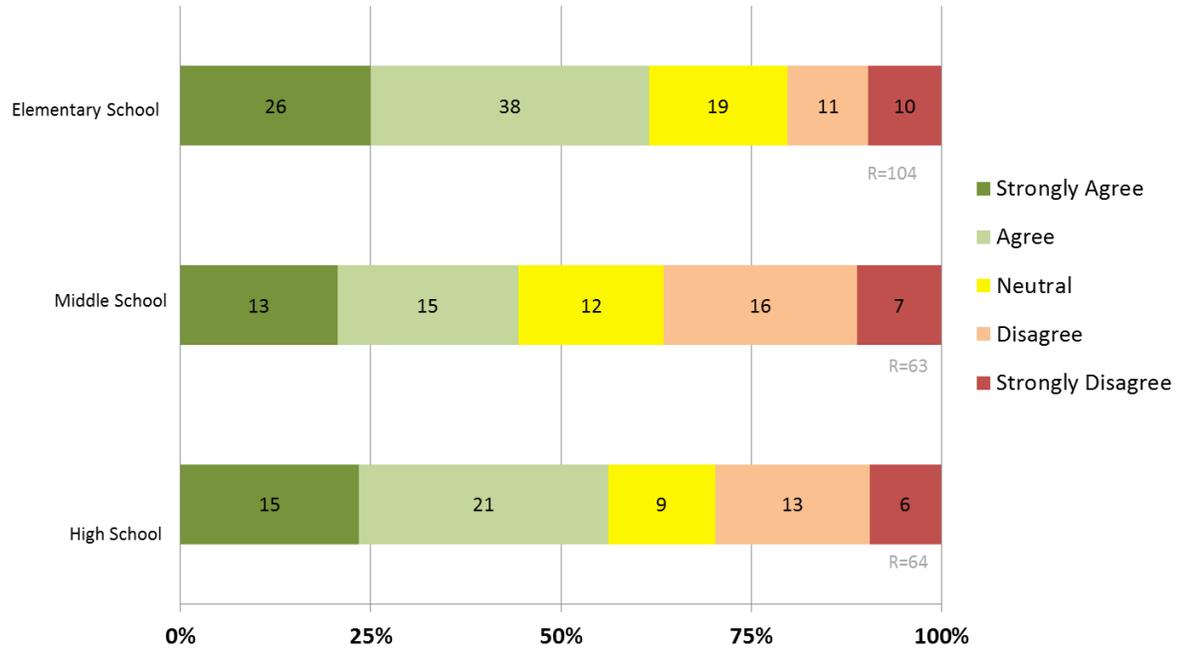
Graph 8: I understand and accept the rationale for the services and goals outlined in my child’s IEP (School Level).



As we look at parent satisfaction with implementation of services by school level, we saw the highest levels of satisfaction at the elementary school level, with a drop in parent satisfaction at middle school, followed by a slight raise in satisfaction at the high school level. For example, for the statement “My child receives all the services I expect based on his/her IEP,” 61% (64) of elementary school parents Strongly Agreed or Agreed, while only 44% (28) of middle school parents and 56% (36) of high school parents were in these categories. For the statement “Overall, I feel the services my child receives are appropriate for his/her needs”, 63% (67) of elementary school parents Strongly Agreed or Agreed, but only 43% (28) of middle school parents and 55% (36) of high school parents Strongly Agreed or Agreed. Similar differences were noted for the statement “My child’s team (i.e., teachers and staff) is given the time and resources to deliver the service plan to my child” and “Overall, I feel my child is well cared for during the school day.”

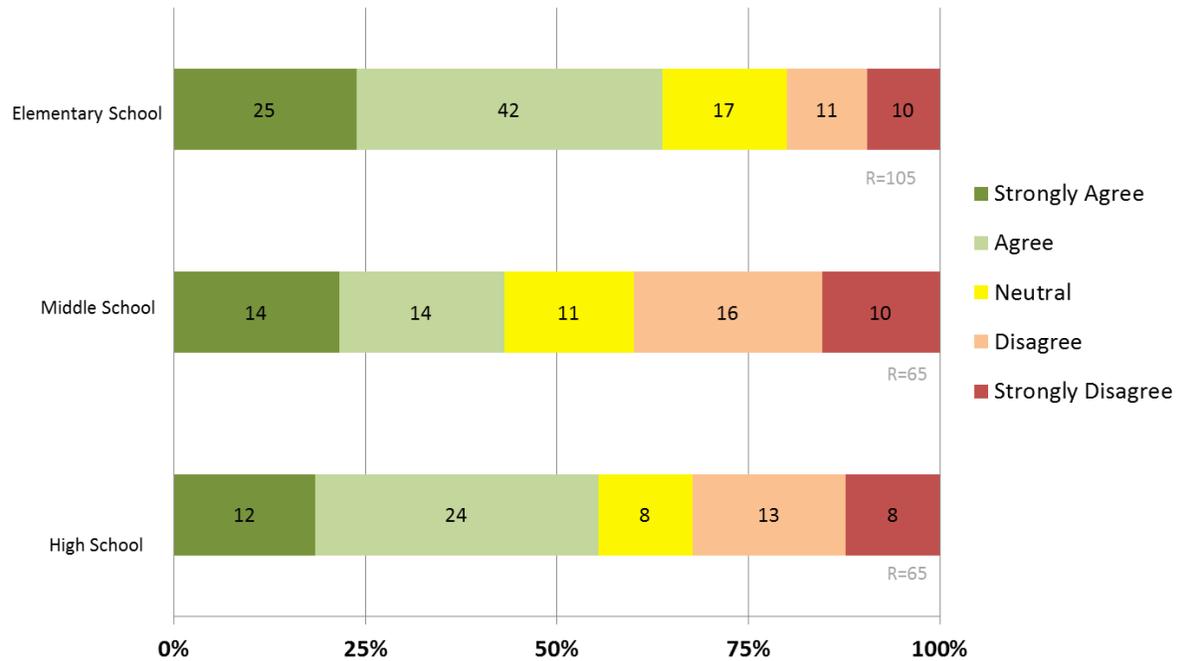
SURVEY RESULTS

Graph 9: My child receives all the services I expect based on his/her IEP (School Level).



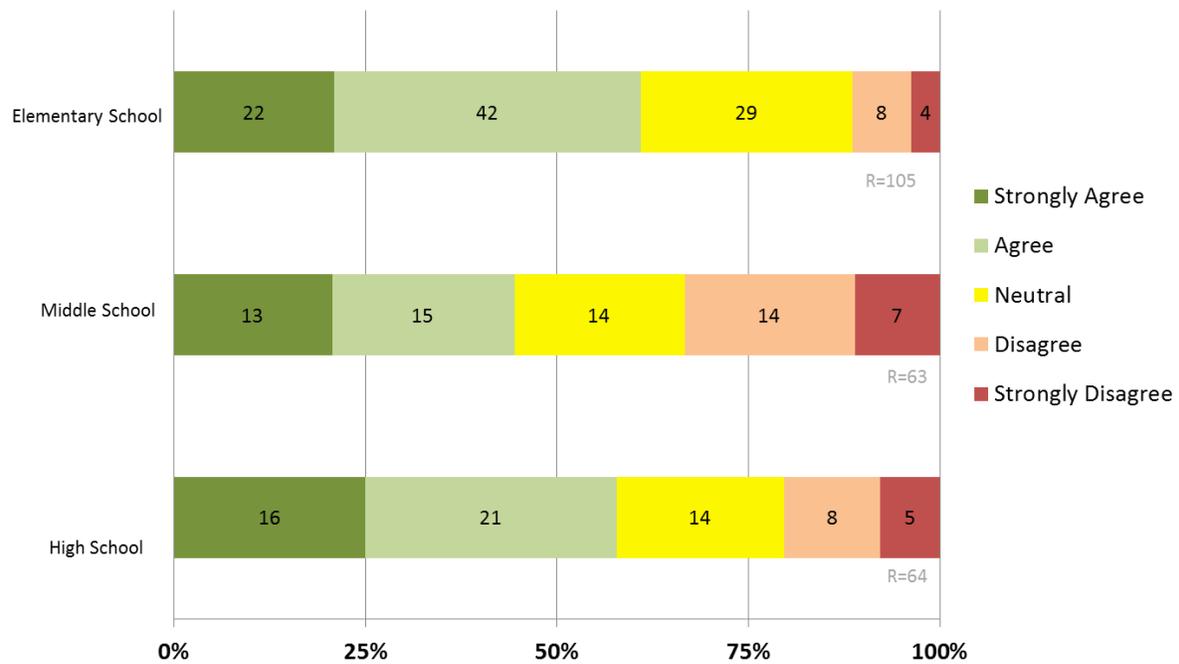
SURVEY RESULTS

Graph 10: Overall, I feel the services my child receives are appropriate for his/her needs (School Level).



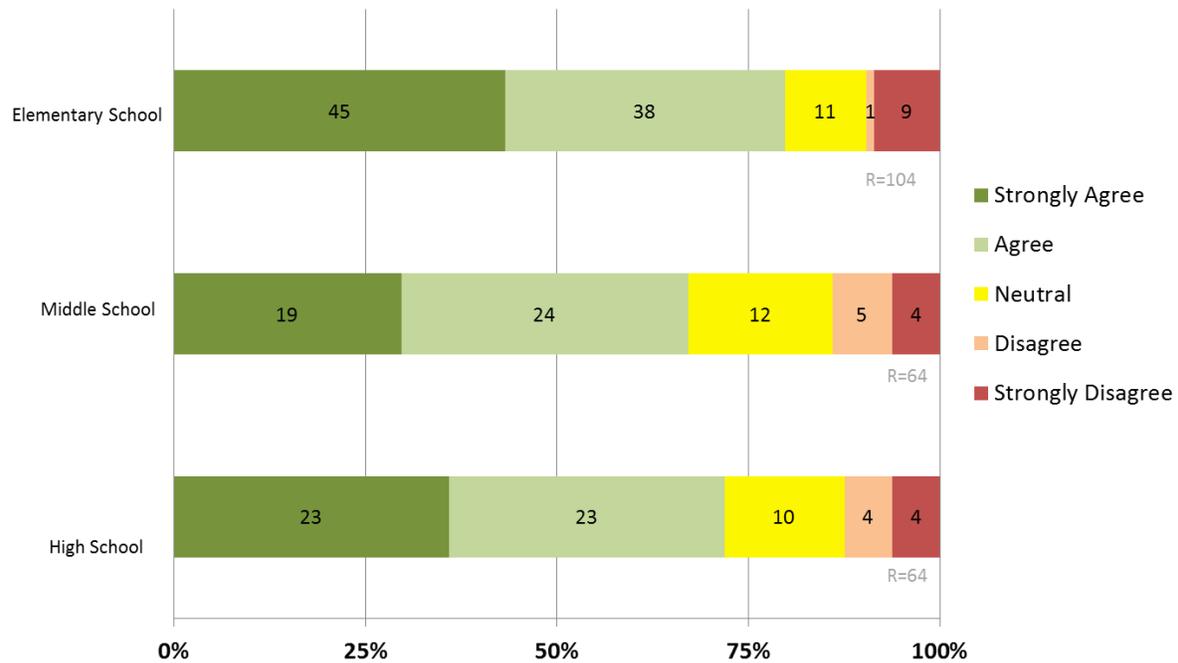
SURVEY RESULTS

Graph 11: My child's team (i.e., teachers and staff) is given the time and resources to deliver the service plan to my child (School Level).



SURVEY RESULTS

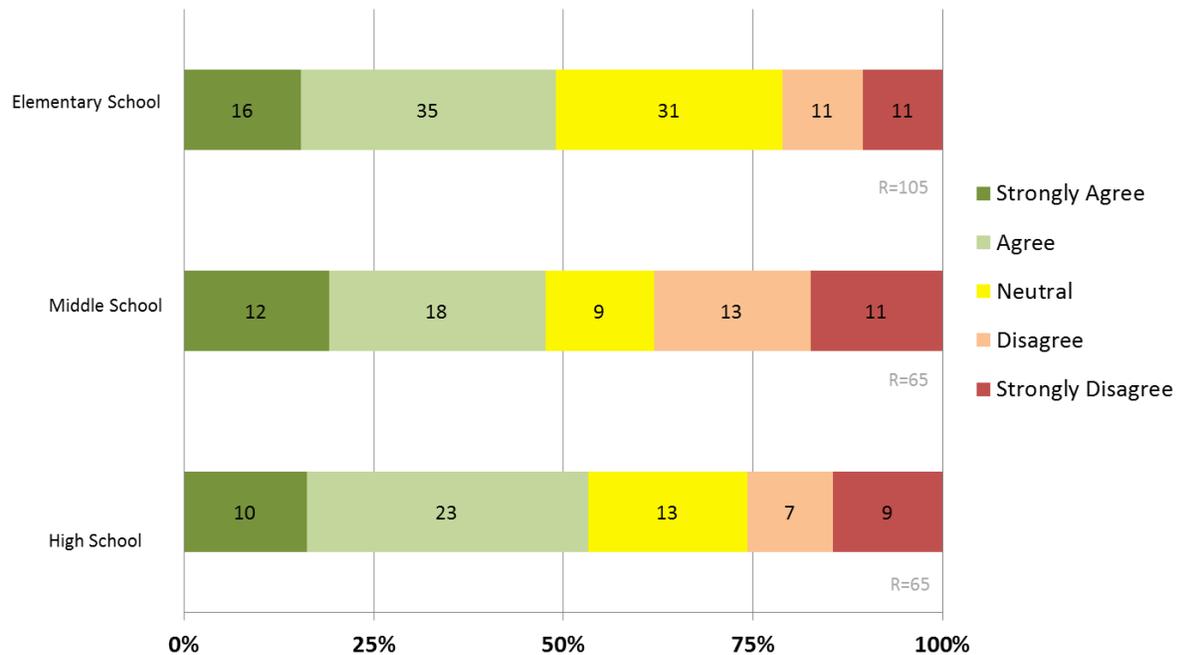
Graph 12: Overall, I feel my child is well cared for during the school day (School Level).



An exception to the trend of having the highest satisfaction levels at the elementary school level was found in the result for the statement, “My child’s rate of progress is measured effectively.” These results found that 48% (51) of elementary school parents and 46% (30) of middle school parents Strongly Agreed or Agreed, while 50% (33) high school parents were in these categories. Of particular note, 20% (22) of elementary school parents and 24% (16) of high school parents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed with this statement, while 36% (24) of middle school parents were in these categories.

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Graph 13: My child's rate of progress is measured effectively (School Level).



PARENT COMMENTS

Many of the parent comments regarding Placement/Services Delivery for Children with an IEP pointed to the strengths of supportive teams and schools, especially talented and caring staff members. For example, one parent commented, “the quality of the teachers and the support for the program is key. We’ve been blessed with great teachers and a well-supported program grounded in the latest research.” Other parents praised the support for individual students and from the whole school team: “We really appreciate the extra attention both the teachers, aides and specialist gave our child, and it's definitely helped make our child be

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successful in the classroom.” And from another parent: “The team works well together and seems to ‘get’ our child. They have a solid understanding of the strengths and weaknesses and are implementing appropriate interventions to address the weaker areas of functioning.”

However, other comments provided insight into concerns about parent input into IEP creation and weaknesses in implementation of services. One parent stated “I do not feel like part of the team process, my input is disregarded, and I feel constantly pressured to accept things that are not appropriate.” Another parent expressed concern about lack of implementation: “The IEP as written sounds good, but my child does not actually receive most of the services.”

Other parents raised concerns about the length of time required to access services, as well as the need to get outside or legal help to ensure implementation of services. As one parent stated, “we had requested testing at the beginning of the year, and it took almost the entire school year before my child got it.” Another parent pointed to concerns about the need for legal support to ensure implementation of the IEP: “I still feel burned by Lexington's putting up many barriers to my child getting the continuity of services required, and costing us thousands of dollars in legal fees just to get them to follow the IEP/placement we had in place when we moved here.”

Finally, several parent comments supported the mixed quantitative results around staff resources and progress monitoring. Regarding staff resources, one parent stated: “with the number of children with special needs in each class, and the amount of material that needs to be covered daily, there is no way that the teachers could possibly provide most (if any) of the services set forth in one's IEP or 504 plan.” Regarding progress monitoring, one parent raised concerns regarding lack of standardized measurements: “I have noticed that there is not a standard measure of the goals among teachers and therapists... the reports are not specific; they are vague and could apply to other students.” Another parent raised concerns about lack of communication: “There are so many things that can be done for free that they refuse such as regular email communication, monthly benchmarks, measurable goals, and explanations/discussions on why a child is not progressing or regressing.”

Of special note in this section were parent comments regarding difficulty at the middle school and high school levels, some of which reflect some of the quantitative results regarding lower satisfaction rates, particularly at the middle school level. Several comments indicated increased difficulty when their children transitioned from elementary school to middle

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school, and again with the transition to the high school. For example, one parent stated: “There is little communication from the middle school regarding my child. It is hard to gauge what is working and isn't...I felt the elementary schools were much better at ‘caring’ for my child. Now I feel shut out and almost unwelcome at the middle school and not a partner in my child's care.” Another parent commented: “My child has had an IEP since kindergarten and the IEP team always worked with me to make sure my child’s educational needs were well managed. Now that my child’s hit high school? I have to email teachers weekly, basically begging for information.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

While the overall satisfaction rates for the Placement and Service Delivery section were the highest in the survey, the quantitative results and parent comments point to several possible areas for improvement and recommendations. Parent satisfaction was higher at the point that the IEP and placement is determined than with the implementation or monitoring of services and placements. In addition, parent satisfaction levels in most cases were lowest at the middle school and high school levels (and particularly at the middle school level in most cases). Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed. Please note that ownership of the proposed recommendations is shared with Lexington Public Schools and the Lexington SEPAC/SEPTA.

- Ensure placements are appropriate by measuring and monitoring student progress and program effectiveness in collaboration with parents, with special emphasis on middle school and high school students. (LPS)
 - Committees are currently looking at service delivery models across all domains.
 - School representatives attend transition meetings from Pre-K to elem. to middle and middle to high school.
- Educate parents about all steps of the evaluation and service delivery process and timeline associated with each step. (LPS and SEPAC/SEPTA)
 - November 1, 2013, ETS Round Table with SEPAC/SEPTA
 - Parent Coffee on Feb. 1, 2013 "Referral and Evaluation Process"
 - Currently updating the Student Services Procedural Manual

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- Encourage staff communication early and often, and provide clear communication paths, providing parent education and greater opportunities for parent. (LPS)

Note: Record reviews are completed every 6 years by the Department of Early and Secondary Education (DESE). The district is currently undergoing a self-assessment as part of its coordinated program review (Compliance Review). The self-assessment includes a review of procedures and timelines.

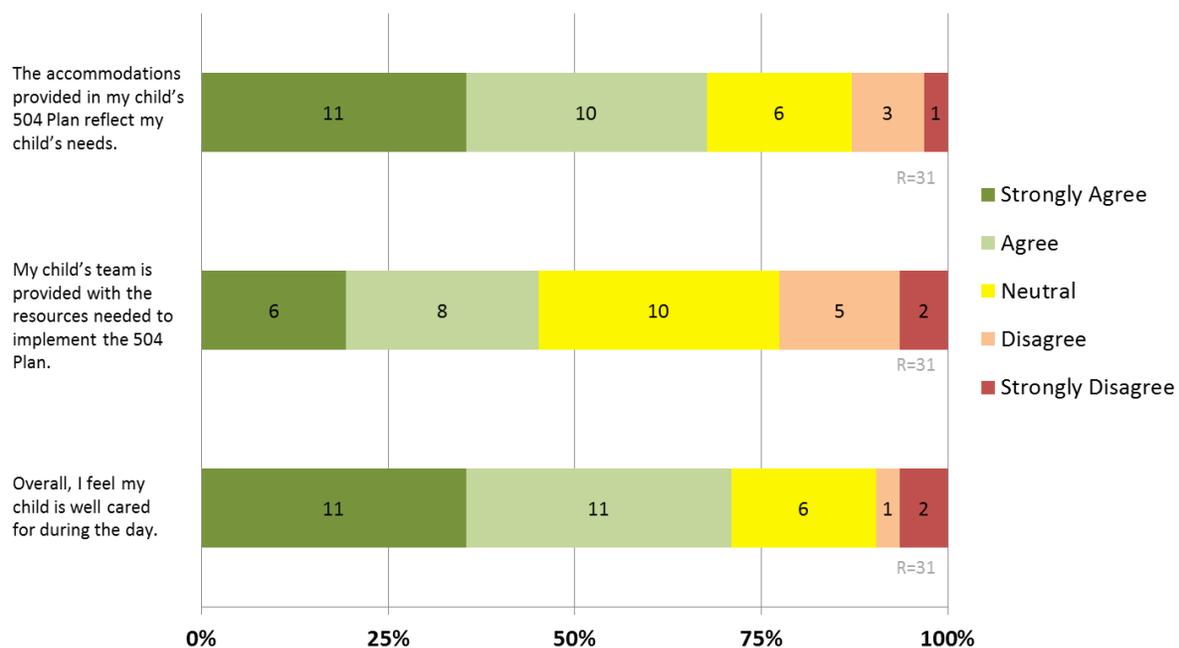
SURVEY RESULTS

Placement/Services Delivery for Children with 504 Plans (Question 7)

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS—ALL SCHOOL LEVELS

Question 7 focused on Placement and Services Delivery for children with 504 Plans. There were 31 respondents for this set of questions (please note that 29 parents identified themselves as parents of children currently on a 504 Plan, and 4 parents identified themselves as parents of children who had a 504 Plan in the last two years but no longer does, and both categories of parents could have answered responded to this section of the survey).

Graph 14: Placement/Services Delivery for Children on 504 Plans



As with parents of children on IEP plans, parent satisfaction was greater for the service plan creation and the overall care for their children. 68% or 21 respondents Agreed or Strongly

SURVEY RESULTS

Agreed that the accommodations provided in their child's 504 Plan reflected their child's needs, with 19% (4) of respondents in the Neutral category, and 10% (4) of respondents saying they Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed. In addition, 71% (21) of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that their child was well cared for during the day, again with 19% in the Neutral category and 10% (4) respondents saying they Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed.

Results were less favorable when parents were asked to provide feedback on whether teams had the resources needed to implement the 504 plan. 45% or 14 respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed with this statement, 32.3% (10) of respondents were Neutral, and 22% (7) of respondents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed.

Because of the lower number of respondents for this category, we did not break the results out by school level.

PARENT COMMENTS

As with the IEP Placement/Service Delivery section, several parents gave high marks to the quality and caring of staff members. One parent commented, "The school has gone above and beyond to make sure that my child is well cared for and that all of the faculty know of my child's condition. My child is having a great year!" Another parent stated, "This is our first year on a 504 plan, and it is making a huge difference in how child is doing at school, and more importantly, how my child is viewing school."

Other parents raised concerns about implementation and communication. One parent stated: "It takes repeated requests to get responses and to meet about the 504 plan." Another parent commented, "I do not know what the teachers have individually implemented or what should be taking place as far as formal procedures." As with the IEP Placement/Service Delivery category, several comments pointed to particular concerns over lack of communication and support at the middle school and high school levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Improvements in communication and education were the common themes for the Placement/Service Delivery for students on 504 Plans. The following recommendations are proposed:

SURVEY RESULTS

- Define communication options for parents so that there is a clear path for getting information and answers to questions. (LPS)
- Educate staff about guidelines for working with students on 504 Plans. (LPS)
 - The Guidance Department is currently completing a Procedural Manual for 504 Plans and has instituted new procedures accordingly.
- Work with parents to understand needs, especially at the middle school and high school levels. (LPS and SEPAC/SEPTA)

SURVEY RESULTS

Partnering with Parents/Outside Experts (Question 9)

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS—ALL SCHOOL LEVELS

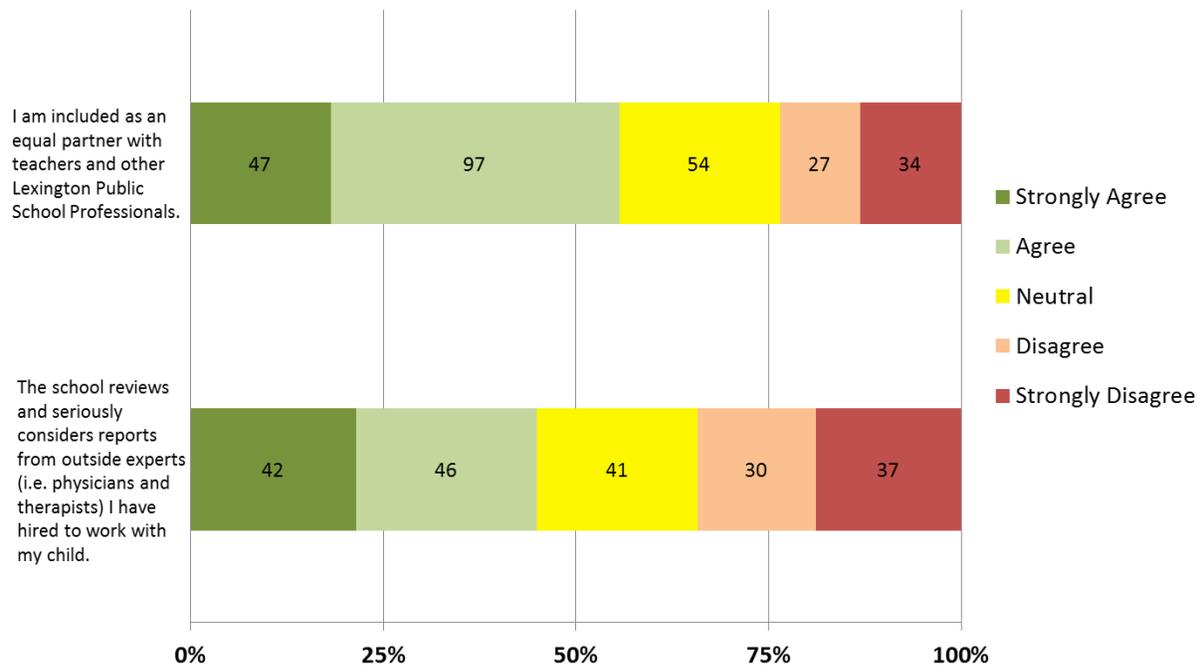
Question 9 focused on parent opinions on how well Lexington Public Schools partners with both parents and outside experts hired by parents.

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 to 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 do hire outside experts, there was a high number of respondents who selected the N/A category for this set of questions. In the graph and discussion below, we have removed the respondents who selected N/A from the calculation of percentages.

SURVEY RESULTS

Graph 15: Partnering with Parents/Outside Experts

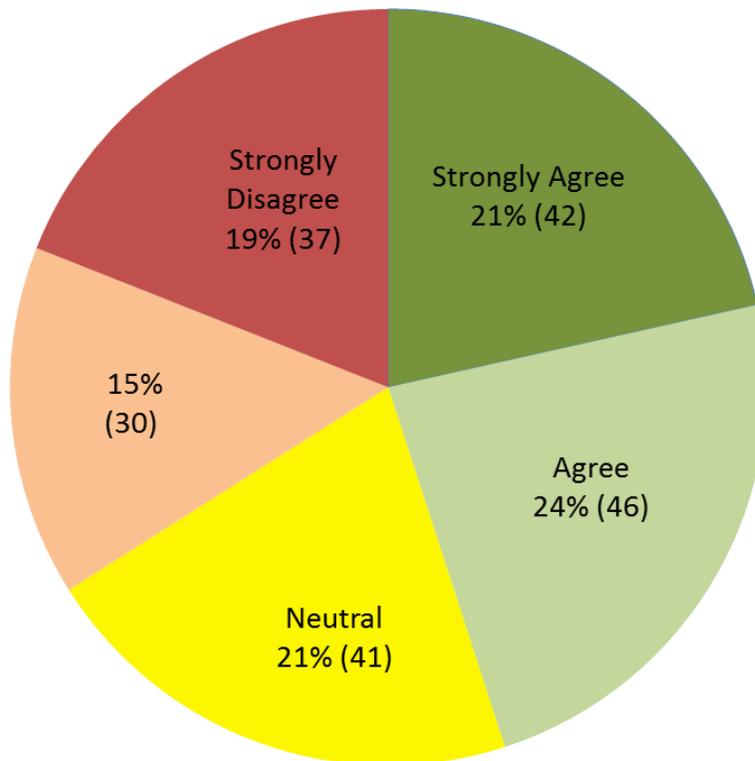


When asked if they were included as equal partners, 55% (144) of 259 respondents said they Agreed or Strongly Agreed, with the 37% (97) in the Agree category and 18% (47) in the Strongly Agree category. 20% (54) of respondents were Neutral, 10% (27) Disagreed, and 13% (34) parents Strongly Disagreed. This was one of the statements where the differences at each end of the scale were higher-- numbers for parents who Strongly Disagreed was higher than the parents who Disagreed, and the numbers for parents who Strongly Agreed was much lower than the parents who Agreed.

When asked if the school reviews and seriously considers reports from outside experts (such as physicians and therapists) hired by parents, only 45% (88) of 196 respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed, with 21% (41) in the Neutral category, and 34% (67) parents Disagreeing or Strongly Disagreeing (one of the few where the Strongly Disagree category was again greater than the Disagree category).

SURVEY RESULTS

Graph 16: The school reviews and seriously considers reports from outside experts (i.e. physicians and therapists) I have hired to work with my child.

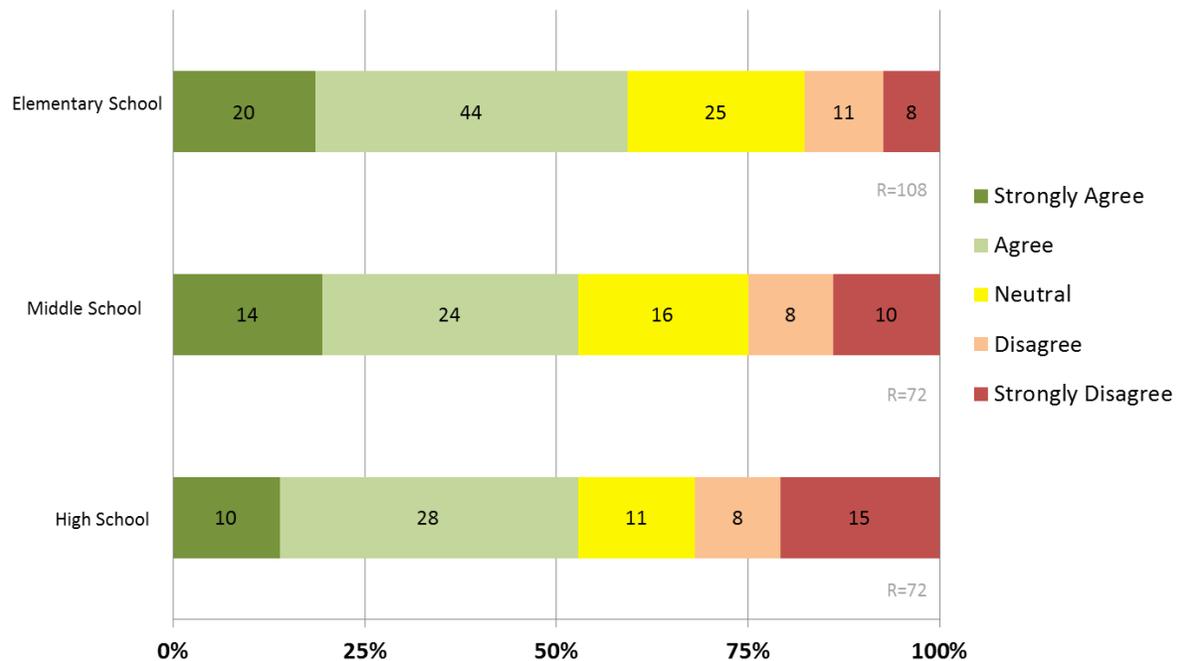


SURVEY RESULTS

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS BY SCHOOL LEVEL

In reviewing these results at the school level, we continue to see the highest satisfaction rates at the elementary school level. For the statement “I am included as an equal partner with teachers and other Lexington Public School Professionals”, 59% (64) of elementary school respondents Strongly Agreed or Agreed, and 52% (38) of middle school and high school parents were in these categories. On the other end of the spectrum, the highest levels of dissatisfaction for this statement were at the high school level, with 31% (23) of high school parents Disagreeing or Strongly Disagreeing, compared to 25% (18) of middle school parents and 17% (19) of elementary school parents.

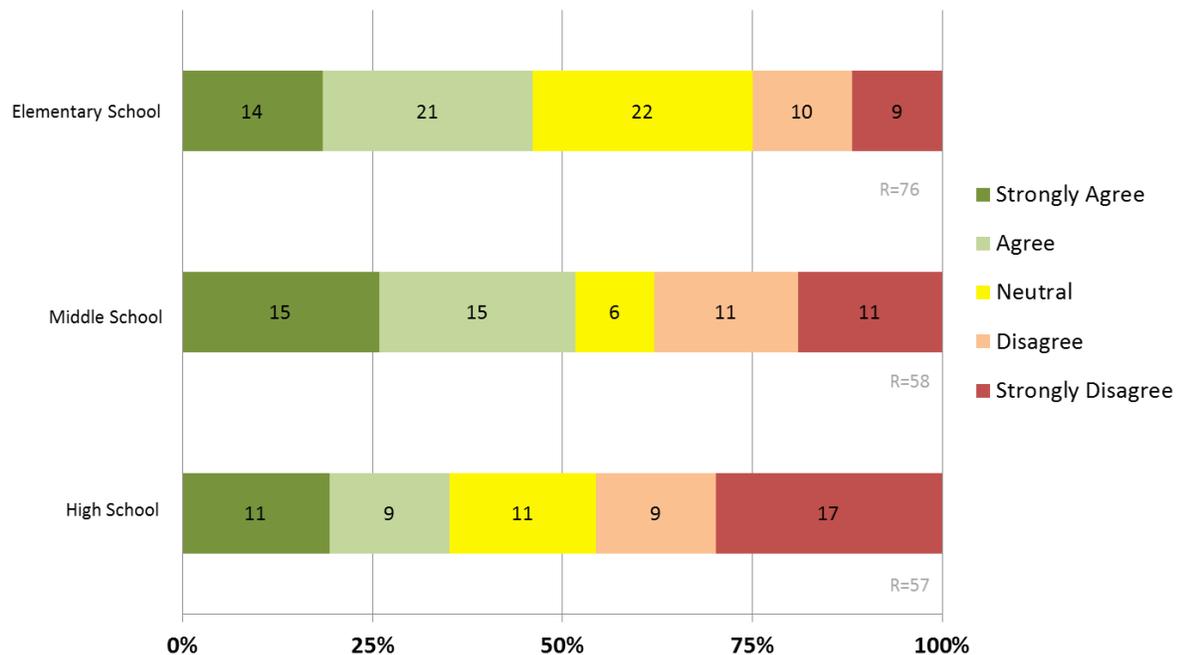
Graph 17: I am included as an equal partner with teachers and other Lexington Public School Professionals (School Level).



SURVEY RESULTS

The school level results for the statement “The school reviews and seriously considers reports from outside experts (i.e. physicians and therapists) I have hired to work with my child” were similar. At the elementary school level, 46% (35) of respondents Strongly Agreed or Agreed, compared to 51% (30) of middle school parents and 35% (20) of high school parents. Again, the highest levels of dissatisfaction were at the high school level, with 45% (26) of high school respondents Disagreeing or Strongly Disagreeing (29% Strongly Disagreeing), as compared to 37% (22) of middle school parents and 25% (19) of elementary school parents.

Graph 18: The school reviews and seriously considers reports from outside experts (i.e. physicians and therapists) I have hired to work with my child (School Level).



SURVEY RESULTS

PARENT COMMENTS

Parent comments associated with other statement categories did point to good collaboration with staff and teachers, such as “The communication between staff and parent...The concept that we all work together as a team to create the best plan for my child.” In addition, five statements associated with this statement category did point to careful consideration for reports from outside experts.

However, of the 49 comments associated with this set of questions, the large majority of parent comments were negative, with the common themes of perceived disrespect for parent input and disregard for outside expert opinion. One parent stated, “Our input, questions and concerns are repeatedly ignored.” Another parent commented, “The public elementary school dismissed all reports I brought in to advocate for my child.” From another parent: “LPS does not care for parents' or professionals' input, does not acknowledge it, does not work together with families, and does not allow time for parents'/professionals' input at end of meeting. Has never worked with my family as a team.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the quantitative results and parent comments, areas for improvement include stronger collaboration with parents, particularly around conflict resolution, and better coordination with parents regarding the use of outside experts. The following recommendations are proposed:

- Compare parent involvement satisfaction rates of parents of children who have IEPs with satisfaction rates of parents of children who do not have IEPs and/or 504 Plans (results of DESE Parent Involvement Survey). (LPS and SEPAC/SEPTA)
- Provide conflict resolution training for parents and staff. (LPS and SEPAC/SEPTA)
 - District provided training for administrators and staff entitled "Difficult Conversations."
 - SEPAC/SEPTA will be planning a workshop on conflict resolution with both parents and staff.

SURVEY RESULTS

- Work with parents to better understand areas for improvement regarding working with outside experts, and provide education about how outside expert recommendations should be incorporated into IEPs and 504 Plans. (LPS and SEPAC/SEPTA)
- Examine current district processes for working with outside experts to better understand areas for improvement, with a focus on the high school level (LPS):
 - Managing disagreements with parents about outside expert evaluations, reports, and recommendations.
 - Communication with outside experts by teachers and administrators (general communication practices, scheduling observations, teacher observation forms, and inclusion of outside experts in team meetings).

SURVEY RESULTS

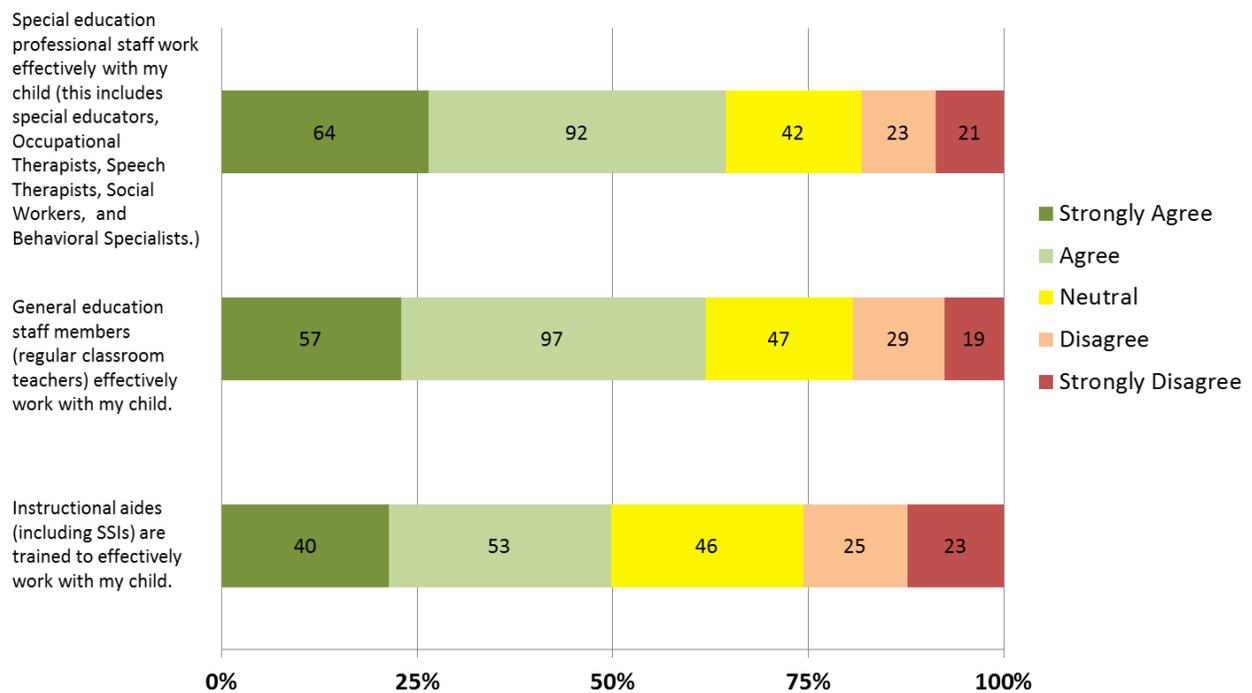
Staff and Training (Question 10)

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS—ALL SCHOOL LEVELS

Question 10 looked at parent opinion regarding staff and training, including general education staff and instructional aides assigned to work with their children. The goal of this set of questions was to better understand parent perspectives and knowledge of staff effectiveness and training.

As with Question 9, this set of questions did not apply to many of the overall respondents (especially regarding instructional aides). In the graph and discussion below, we have removed the respondents who selected N/A from the calculation of percentages.

Graph 19: Staff and Training



SURVEY RESULTS

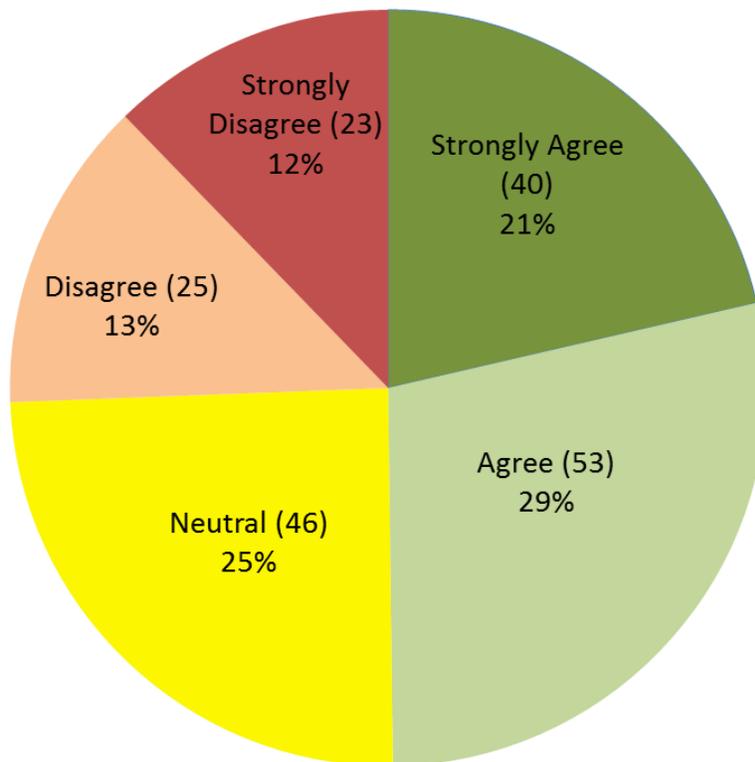
The majority of respondents were satisfied that special education professional staff worked effectively with their children—64% (156) of 242 respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed with this statement, with strong results in the Strongly Agree category (26% or 64). 17% or 42 parents were in the Neutral category, and 17% (44) of respondents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed.

The results were similar for parent opinion regarding the effectiveness of general education staff. 60% (154) of 249 respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed with this statement. 18% or 47 parents were Neutral, and 18% (48) of respondents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed.

Results were less favorable regarding parent satisfaction with the training of instructional aides. Instructional aides are typically assigned to one student or shared between two or more students who require additional support to access the mainstream curriculum. This support may occur in the mainstream classroom environment or outside the mainstream classroom environment in separate classrooms or resource rooms, depending on the services defined in a student's IEP. While 50% (93) of 189 respondents did Agree or Strongly Agree that instructional aides are trained effectively to work with their child, 25% (46) of respondents were Neutral, and the rest of the respondents were equally split between the Disagree (13%, 25) and Strongly Disagree (12%, 23) categories.

SURVEY RESULTS

Graph 20: Instructional aides (including SSIs) are trained to effectively work with my child.

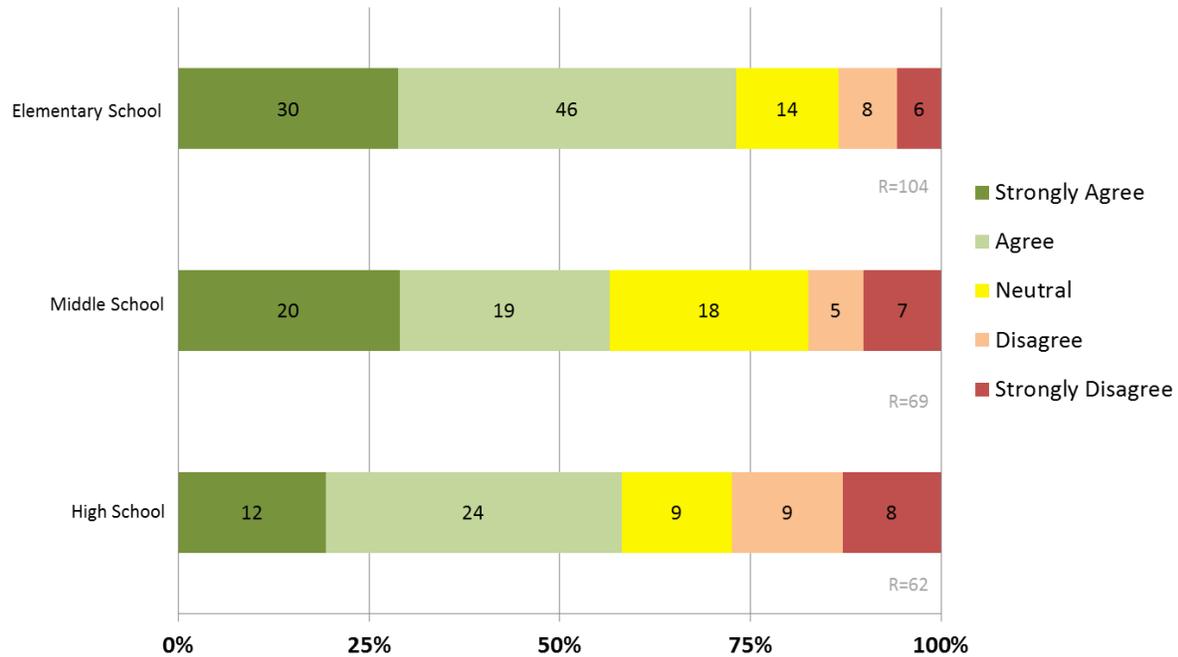


QUANTITATIVE RESULTS BY SCHOOL LEVEL

In reviewing these results by school level, the highest satisfaction rates were at the elementary school with varying results at the middle school and high school levels. For the statement, “Special education professional staff work effectively with my child,” 73% (76) of elementary school parents Strongly Agreed or Agreed compared to 56% (39) of middle school parents and 58% (36) of high school parents. Only 13% (14) of elementary school parents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed, compared to 17% (12) of middle school parents and 27% (17) of high school parents.

SURVEY RESULTS

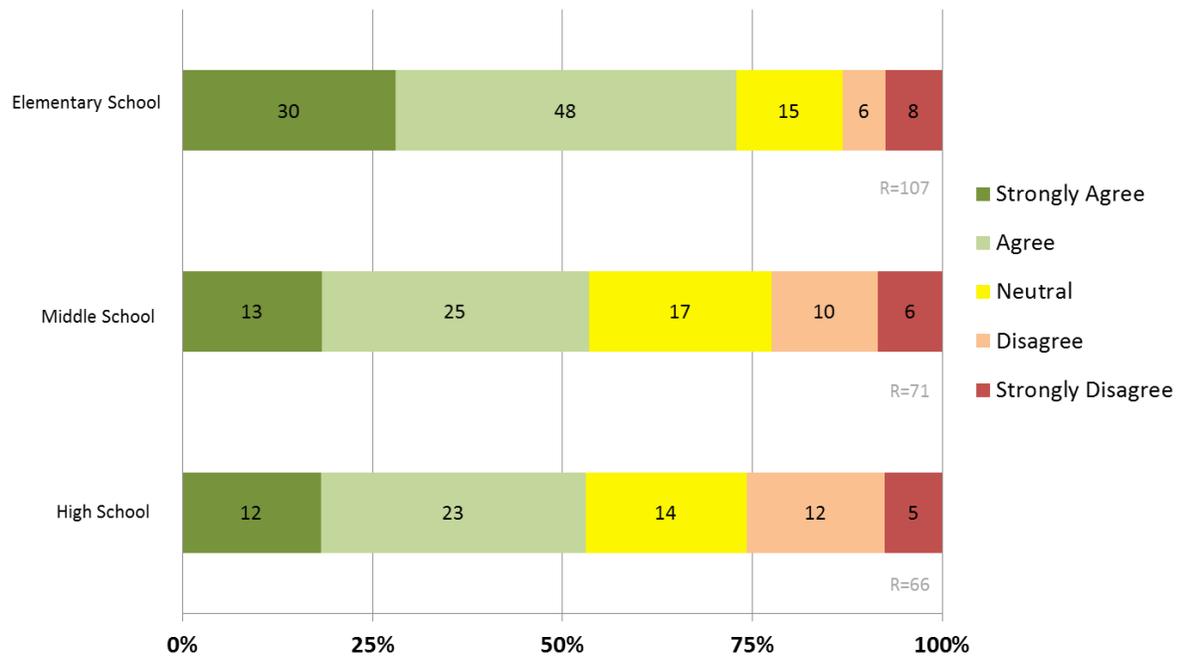
Graph 21: Special education professional staff work effectively with my child (School Level).



We saw similar results when asking about general education staff members. For the statement “General education staff members (regular classroom teachers) effectively work with my child,” 72% (78) of elementary school parents Strongly Agreed or Agreed, with 53% of middle school (38 respondents) and high school parents (35 respondents) in these categories. At other end of the scale, 13% (14) of elementary school parents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed, compared to 22% (16) of middle school parents and 25% (17) of high school parents.

SURVEY RESULTS

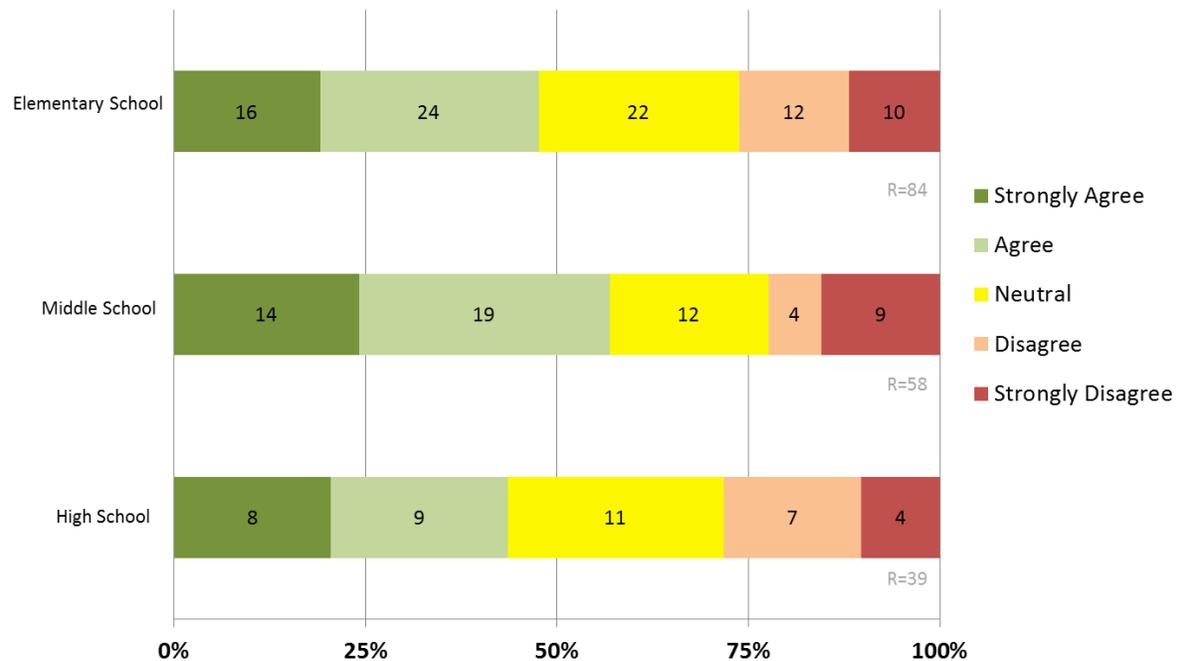
Graph 22: General education staff members (regular classroom teachers) effectively work with my child (School Level).



Satisfaction rates for instructional aid training were highest at the middle school. For the statement, “Instructional aides (including SSIs) are trained to effectively work with my child,” 56% (33) of middle school parents Strongly Agreed or Agreed, compared to 47% (40) of elementary school parents and 43% (17) of high school parents.

SURVEY RESULTS

Graph 23: Instructional aides (including SSIs) are trained to effectively work with my child (School Level).



PARENT COMMENTS

As with many of the comment sections, parents gave praise to the dedication, enthusiasm, and talent of the special education teachers, general education staff, and instructional aides who work with their children. As one parent commented, “I think the teachers involved with my child are mostly amazing. They have great education and enthusiasm. Their knowledge is fabulous and they do their utmost to help my child and do what’s best...By this I mean the teachers both in the special education department and under her IEP as well as his/her in-class teachers.” Another parent said, “The quality of the special education staff is amazing to me, and they are all so kind and giving.”

SURVEY RESULTS

For the negative comments, common themes were inconsistency of teacher quality and lack of instructional aide training. Several parents reported a very positive experience one year and a negative experience in a different year based on staff assignments. As one parent stated, “I checked neutral because it all depends on the teacher/educator. Some seem to get it while others don't.” Another parent stated, “Most of the staff is really good but where they are bad they are out of touch. Thus my neutral response -- actually it is hit-and-miss.”

Parent comments also added detail to the mixed quantitative results regarding instructional aides—around training but also around lack of communication with instructional aides and lack of knowledge regarding their training and role. As one parent said, “Retention of quality IA's has been a chronic problem--children have had different IA's every year- with very mixed results- new staff with learning curves increase transition difficulties each fall for many students.” From another parent: “Not always sure how well the IAs are trained when working with my child. This year there is no communication between IA and parent.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

While parents are generally satisfied with the quality of special education and general education staff, the quantitative results and parent comments showed concerns about instructional aides and overall consistency of staff. The following recommendations are proposed:

- Examine Instructional Aide (IA) training and retention (LPS).
- Educate parents about instructional aide roles and training requirements.
 - 60 IAs have been trained in effective behavioral interventions with a focus on proactive strategies.
 - There is mandatory annual training for all support staff.
- Look at communication paths between parents and instructional aides, and clearly define communication guidelines for parents.
- Examine instructional aide retention rates to determine if parent perceptions are valid given district data.
- Define communication paths for parents with staff concerns, particularly at the middle schools and high school.

SURVEY RESULTS

Behavior Interventions (Questions 11-15)

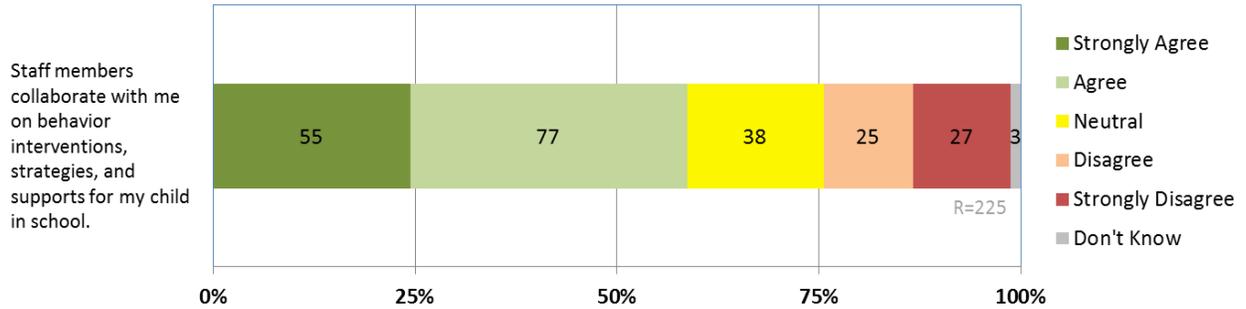
QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Questions 11-15 focused on parent opinions regarding the effectiveness of behavioral interventions with their child. These questions were of particular importance due to concerns raised at SEPAC and School Committee meetings regarding possible lack of parent participation in behavior plans and interventions, and behavioral assessments such as a Functional Behavioral Assessment, an assessment that is typically conducted when a student is having behavioral problems in the classroom, and staff and parents want to get more information about why that behavior is happening. Please note that behavior plans and functional behavior assessments can be requested for students who are not in the special education programs, but our target audience was parents of students in special education. In addition, while behavior intervention strategies are part of most classroom approaches in some way, the behavior plans we were attempting to get information about are formal documents that define the behavior management and intervention strategies for a particular child.

The first statement (Question 11) in this section looked at parent perspectives on how well staff members collaborated with them on behavior interventions, strategies, and supports for their children in the school setting. Because our focus group and other survey research indicated that parents may not have the information to answer these questions, we added a Don't Know category for these statements. Also, because 46 parents selected N/A for this statement, we removed those respondents from the calculation of percentages for this graph.

SURVEY RESULTS

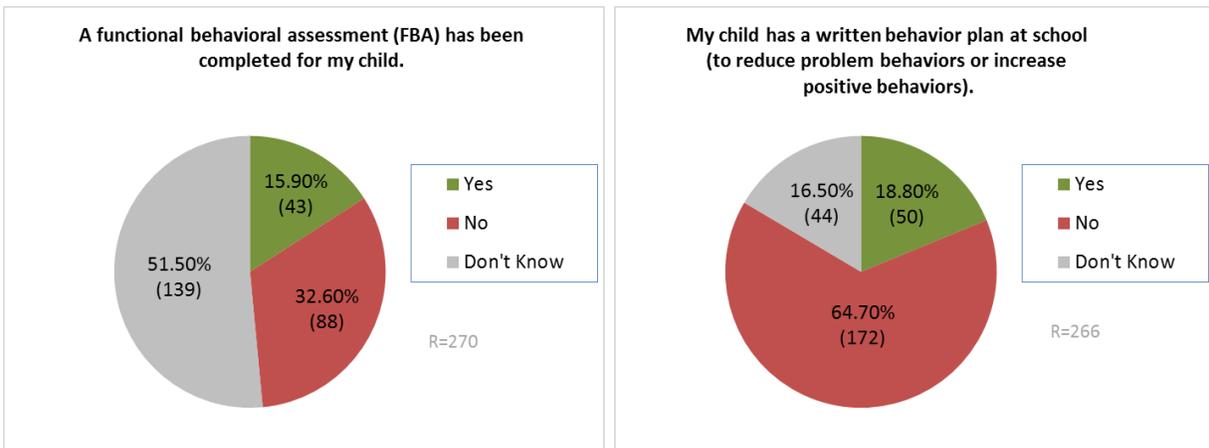
Graph 24: Staff members collaborate with me on behavior interventions, strategies, and supports for my child in school.



The majority of parents responded favorably to this statement—58.6% (132) of 225 respondents said they Agreed or Strongly Agreed. 16.8 (38) parents were Neutral, and 23% (52) Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed.

We also looked at whether parents knew if a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) or behavior plan had been completed for their child (Questions 12 and 14 in the survey). Over 50% (51.5 or 139) of 270 respondents did not know if an FBA had been completed for their child. 16.5% or 44 of 266 respondents did not know if their child had a written behavior plan.

Graph 25: Parent Knowledge of Functional Behavioral Assessments and Behavior Plans

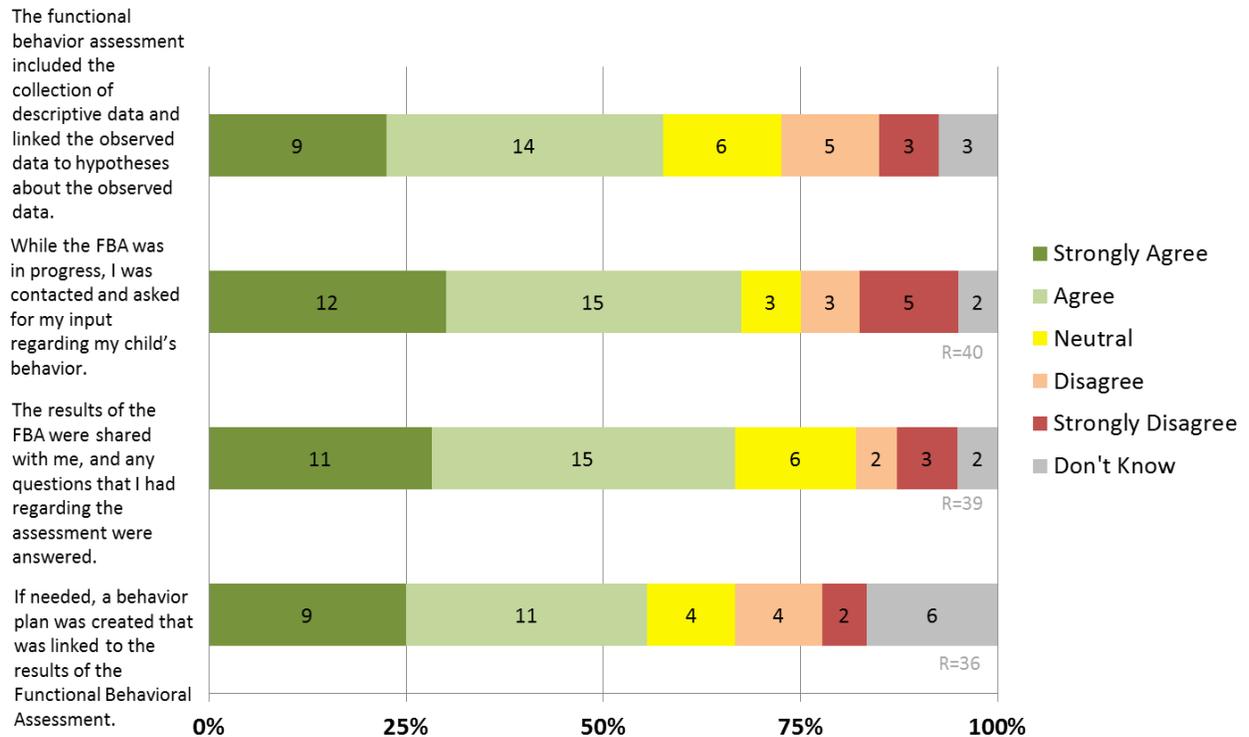


The next set of statements (Question 13) looked at parent perspectives on the Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBAs) that had been conducted for their children. The response

SURVEY RESULTS

numbers are smaller here, as a smaller number of parents have had an FBA conducted for their child.

Graph 26: Functional Behavioral Assessments



This graph shows that most parents (55% of 40 respondents) Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the FBA contained data that linked back to hypotheses about the child's behavior, a mark of effectiveness for this type of assessment. In addition, 64% of parents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they were asked for input when the FBA was in progress, and 61% Agreed or Strongly Agreed that FBA results were shared and questions were answered. Respondents who Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed with these statements were below 20% and fewer than 10 respondents.

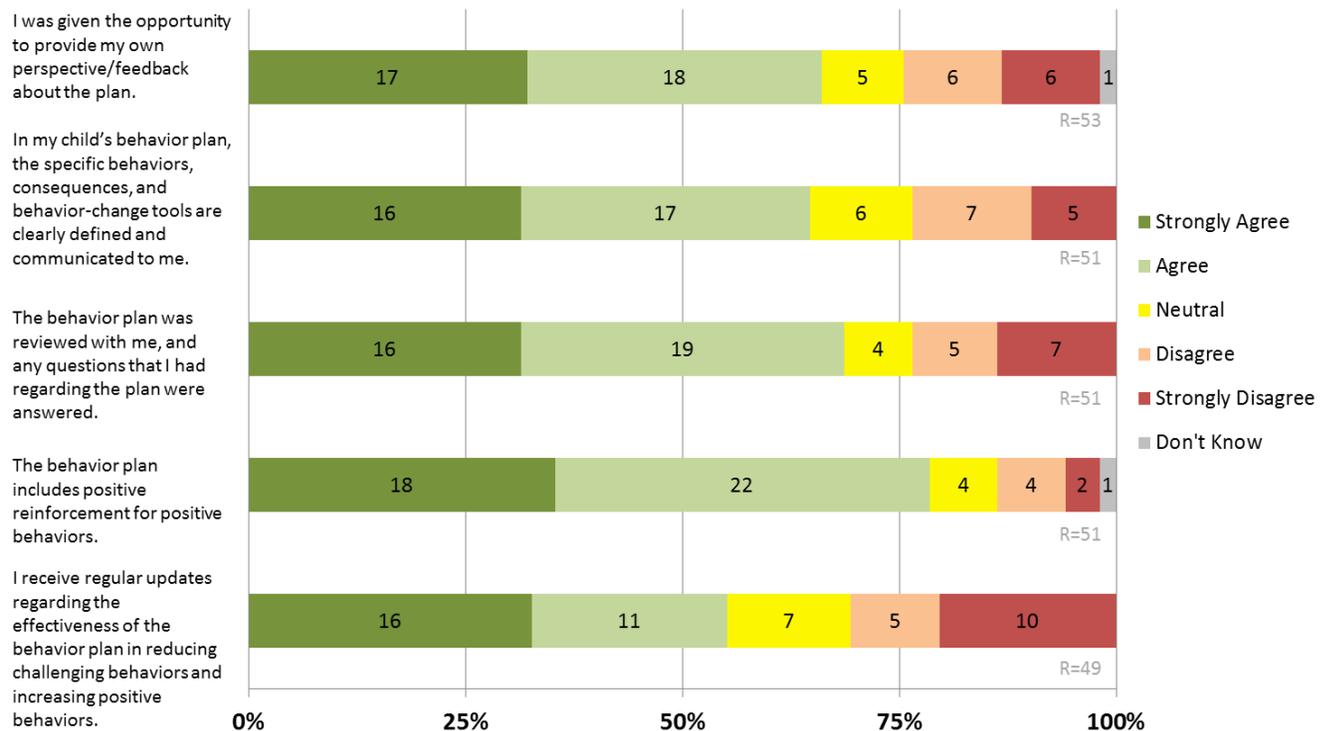
We also asked if a behavior plan was created that linked back to the FBA. Please note that not all FBAs will result in a behavior plan, and not all behavior plans are necessarily preceded

SURVEY RESULTS

by an FBA. However, we did want to determine parents' knowledge in this area, and found that 55% Agreed or Strongly Agreed with this statement, 11% were Neutral, 16% or 6 of the 36 respondents did not know, while another 16% or 6 of the respondents either Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed.

Question 15 looked at parent participation and knowledge of behavior plans. With this set of questions, we wanted to better understand if parents were given the opportunity to provide input into the plan, how much parents understand about their child's behavior plan, and how well parents believe the plans are monitored for effectiveness. Again, because not all parents have children on behavior plans, the respondent numbers here are smaller relative to the overall survey response numbers.

Graph 27: Behavior Plans



SURVEY RESULTS

Regarding their ability to provide feedback about the behavior plan, results were mostly positive, with 65% or 35 of 53 respondents Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing with this statement in roughly equal numbers, and 22% or 12 respondents Disagreeing or Strongly Disagreeing, also in equal numbers.

Similarly, parents gave positive feedback on communication of the details of the behavior plan, with 64% or 36 of 51 respondents Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing, and 22% Disagreeing or Strongly Disagreeing. In addition, 68% of parents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the behavior plan was reviewed with them, with 22% Disagreeing or Strongly Disagreeing.

Parents gave particularly positive responses when asked if the behavior plan included positive reinforcement for positive behaviors. 78% or 40 of 51 respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed, and only 10.8% or 6 respondents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed.

The least favorable results in this set of question were regarding parent updates on the effectiveness of the behavior plan. 55% or 27 of 49 respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed, while 14.2 or 7 respondents were Neutral, and 30.2% or 15 respondents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed (with higher numbers in the Strongly Disagree category).

Because the respondent levels were smaller for this section of the survey, we did not break out the results by school level.

PARENT COMMENTS

We had 116 parent comments with this section of the survey. Common positive statements pointed to a strong collaborative process and quality services and staff. As one parent commented, “[The Behavior Plan] has been a very collaborative process and has resulted in very positive outcomes.” Another parent commented, “Highly organized systems and strategies in place and easy to activate. We are really impressed.”

Conversely, the common themes of negative comments pointed to ineffective communication with parents and inconsistency in quality and response time. One parent pointed to the length of time required to complete an FBA: “I had to ask for approximately 8 months before [an FBA] was begun, and it took 6 months to get a report. It was extremely difficult to get them to move forward with FBA tools and data (collecting and reporting).” Another parent commented on a lack of collaboration and communication regarding their child’s behavior

SURVEY RESULTS

plan and intervention strategies: “No collaboration, no information sharing, and no FBA done prior to writing restraints into behavior plan, and waiting until they write use of restraints into behavior plan before they begin to discuss dramatic behavior changes with us.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our results found that some parents lack knowledge of the tools LPS uses to assess and manage behavior (FBAs and Behavior Plans), and whether those tools are being used with their children. In addition, our results showed parent concern about how behavior management tools are being monitored and communicated to parents. The following recommendations are proposed:

- Educate parents about behavior plans and Functional Behavior Assessments (what they are, when they are needed, and the related processes and timelines). (LPS and SEPAC/SEPTA)
- Examine best practices for measuring and monitoring behavior plans and work with parents to understand what information would be most helpful to them. (LPS)
 - A new Behavior Specialist was added to the staff district-wide this year.
 - Expectations are that all written student behavior plans will be reviewed with parents. To help monitor this, a new form has been implemented that is handed to parents and is placed in the student's file. Upcoming Professional Development will ensure district-wide implementation.
 - To date, 150 staff were trained or re-certified in Crisis Prevention Institute training. More will be trained by the end of the year.
 - ABA Coordinator and behavior specialists are visiting all schools to help them continually improve building-based responses to potentially escalating behavioral issues.

SURVEY RESULTS

Communication (Questions 16 and 17)

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS—ALL SCHOOL LEVELS

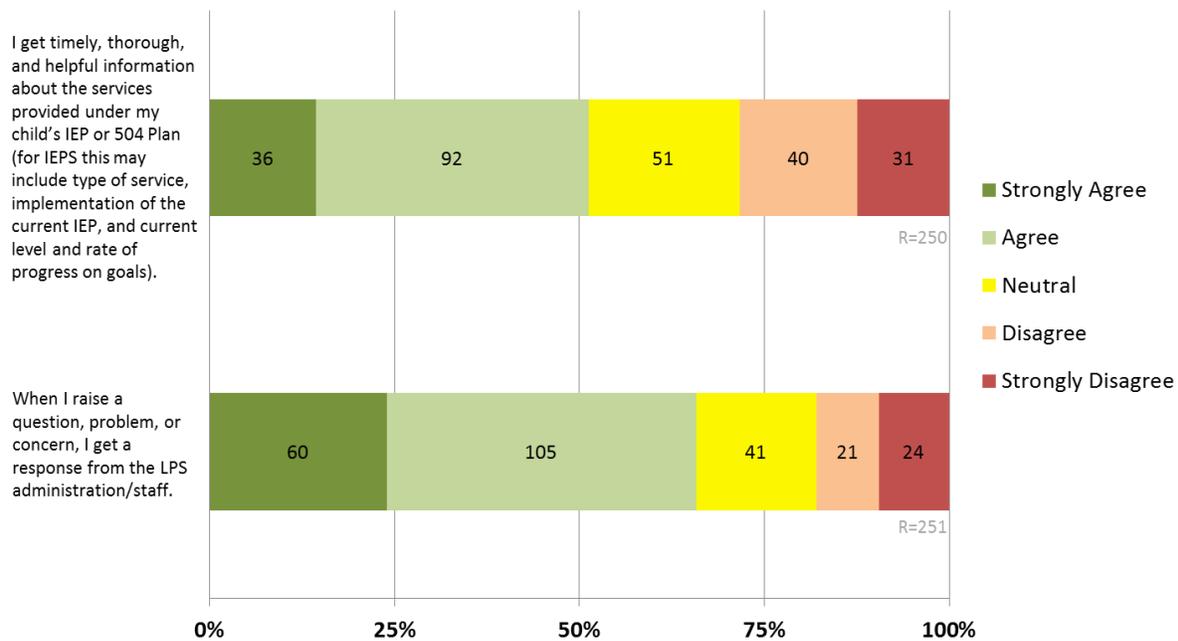
In this section, we were looking to gauge parent perspectives on both timeliness of communication about their child's services or when a question or problem is raised, and whether parents felt comfortable raising concerns/questions with LPS administration and staff.

In the September SEPAC and School Committee discussions about the behavioral intervention strategies used with special needs students, as well as in the focus group conducted by the SEPAC Survey Working team, several issues around communication were raised. Some parents raised issues in public forums after staying quiet about concerns. In our focus group, several indicated that they felt they could not communicate openly and honestly with LPS staff and administration.

The first set of statements looked at the timeliness of information from the administration about services and rate of progress, as well as the timeliness of responses from LPS staff and administration when a question or concern is raised.

SURVEY RESULTS

Graph 28: Timeliness of Communication



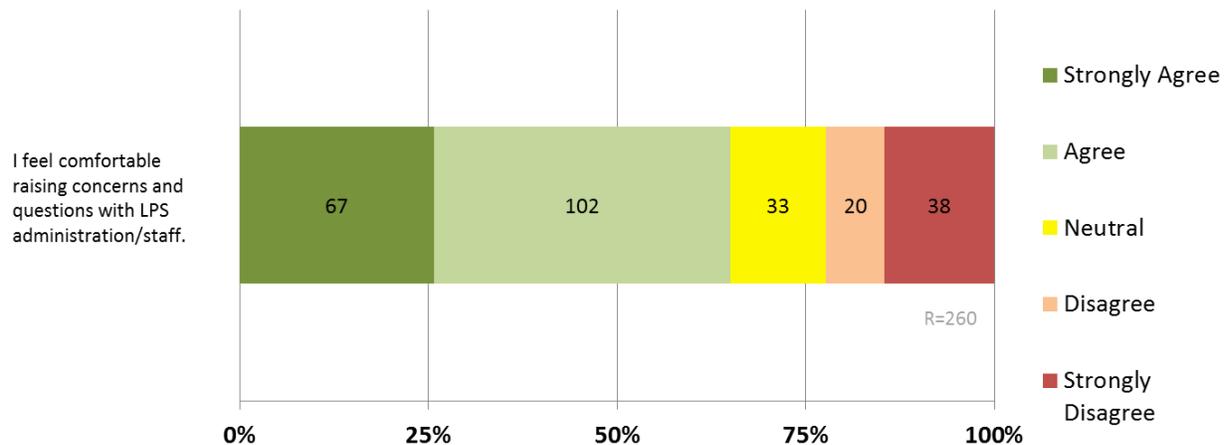
As this graph shows, a little more than half of the respondents (51.2% or 128 of 250 respondents) either Agreed or Strongly Agreed (with more respondents in the Agree category) that they received timely information about the services their child receives in their IEP or 504 Plan. 20.4% or 51 respondents were Neutral, and 28.4% or 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. 65.7% or 165 of 251 respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed, 16.3% or 41 parents were Neutral, and 17.8% or 45 parents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed (in roughly equal numbers).

In Question 17, we asked parents how comfortable they were raising questions and concerns with LPS administration and staff.

SURVEY RESULTS

Graph 29: Communication: Concerns and Questions



64.9% or 169 out of 260 respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed with this statement (with the majority in the Agree category). 12.6% or 33 respondents were Neutral, and 22.2% or 58 parents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed, with more parents in the Strongly Disagree category.

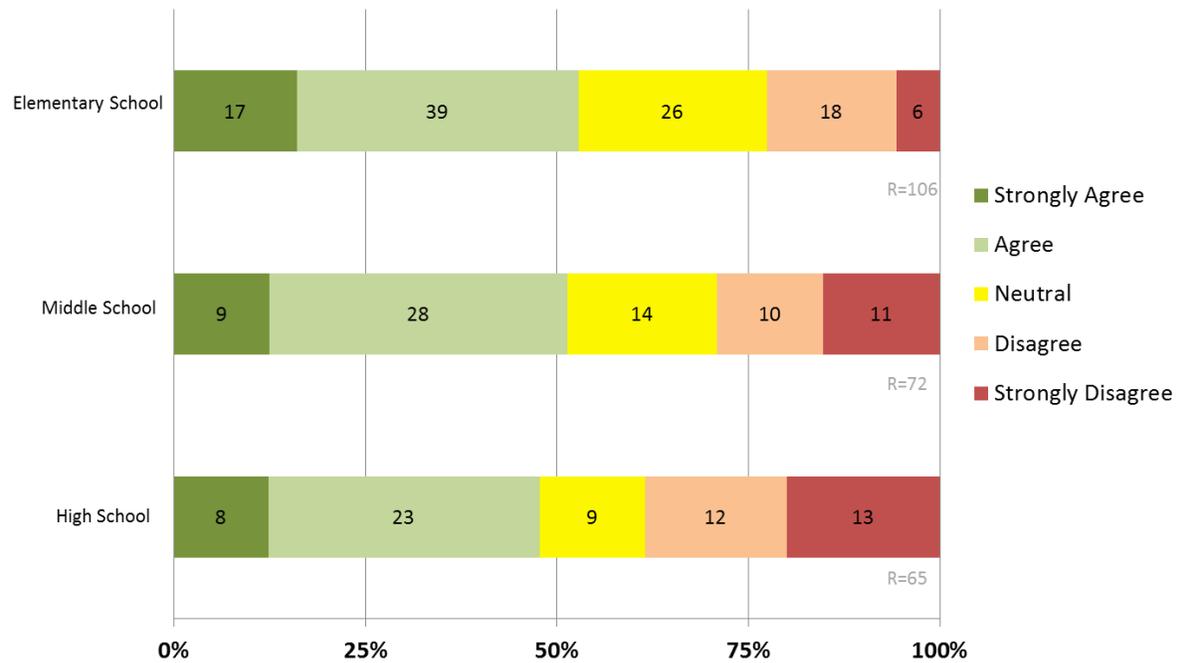
QUANTITATIVE RESULTS BY SCHOOL LEVEL

In looking at these results by school level, we again saw the highest overall satisfaction rates at the elementary school level. For the statement “I get timely, thorough, and helpful information about the services provided under by child’s IEP or 504 Plan (for IEPS this may include type of service, implementation of the current IEP, and current level and rate of progress on goals),” 52% (56) elementary school parents and 52% (37) of middle school parents Agreed or Strongly Agreed, compared to 47% (31) of high school parents. For the statement “When I raise a question, problem, or concern, I get a response from the LPS administration/staff,” 71% (72) of elementary school parents Agreed or Strongly Agreed, with 68% (49) of middle school parents and 53% (38) of high school parents in these categories. At the other end of the scale, 26% (19) of high school parents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed

SURVEY RESULTS

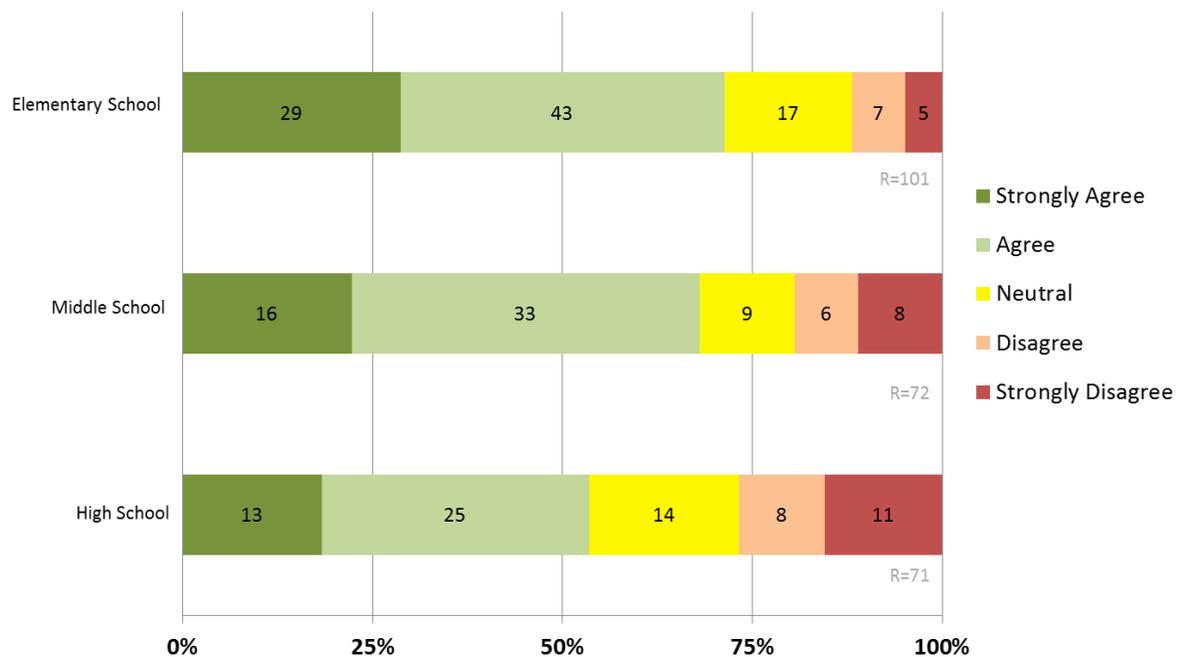
(15%, 11 Strongly Disagreed), compared to 19% (14) of middle school parents and 11% (12) of elementary school parents.

Graph 30: I get timely, thorough, and helpful information about the services provided under my child's IEP or 504 Plan (School Level).



SURVEY RESULTS

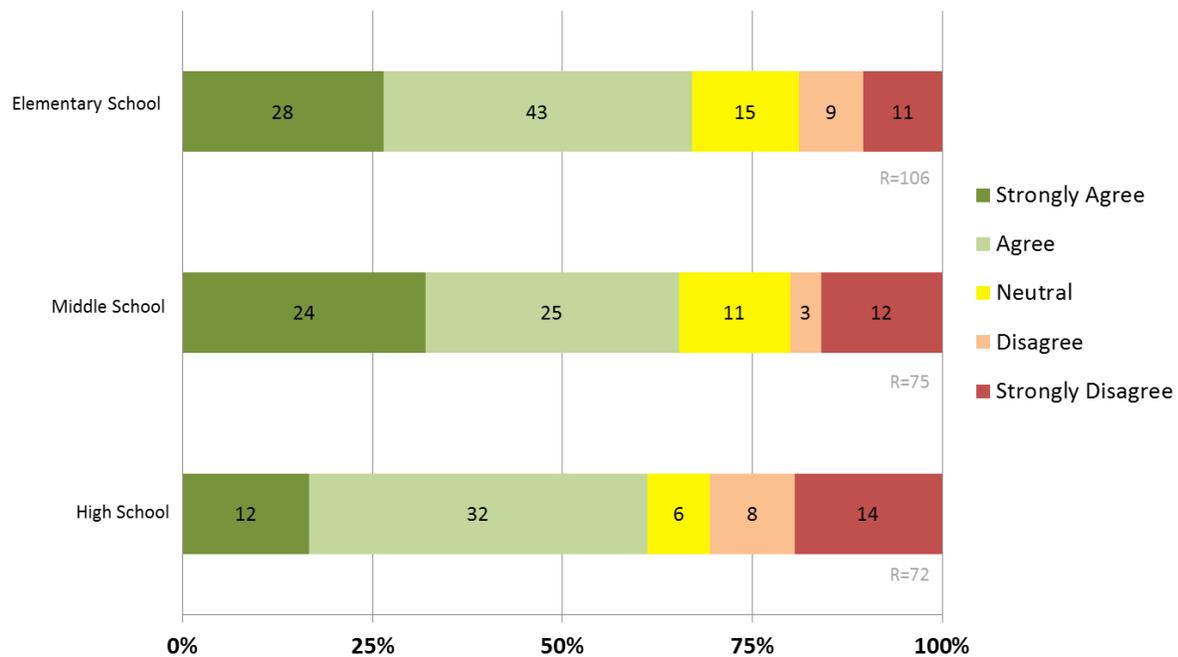
Graph 31: When I raise a question, problem, or concern, I get a response from the LPS administration/staff (School Level).



For the statement ‘I feel comfortable raising concerns and questions with LPS administration/staff,’ we again saw the lowest satisfaction rates at the high school level, with the elementary and middle school levels at somewhat similar rates. At the elementary school level, 66% (71) of parents Agreed or Strongly Agreed, compared with 65% (49) of middle school parents and 61% (44) of high school parents. At the high school level, 30% (22) of parents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed (19%, 14 Strongly Disagreed), compared to 20% (15) of middle school parents and 18% (20) of elementary school parents.

SURVEY RESULTS

Graph 32: I feel comfortable raising concerns and questions with LPS administration/staff (School Level).



PARENT COMMENTS

We received 49 comments for Questions 16 and 61 comments for Questions 17. For Question 17, we asked respondents who Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed with the statement to tell us why in the Comments area.

Many parents provided positive feedback about the promptness of staff and administration responses. One parent commented, “The administration is very good about responding to any emails/calls/concerns promptly.” Another parent stated, “[I appreciate] having a ‘point person’ that my child trusts available at school for questions, feedback, problem-solving and reflection.”

SURVEY RESULTS

However, there were also parent comments that pointed to an inconsistency in response time and follow-through. One parent commented, “It is difficult to get staff to follow through on meetings, assessments and general questions. They are always polite and empathetic but maybe overworked?”

Lastly, a common theme from the comments provided for Question 17 was a fear of retaliation for raising concerns/questions. Of the 61 comments provided by parents, 23 comments (37%) indicated intimidation and fear of reduction of services, or not receiving the services their children need, as reasons for not feeling comfortable raising questions and concerns. One parent stated, “I am afraid of being considered a trouble maker and then my child's services will suffer.” Another parent commented, “There is retaliation for raising concerns in the form of delayed meetings, limiting access to teachers, and even filing false child abuse reports.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

The quantitative results and parent comments point to several areas of improvement in communication approaches, particularly as students progress from elementary school to middle school to high school. The comments indicate that breakdowns in communication may also occur when parents fear retaliation for raising concerns and questions. The following recommendations are proposed:

- Examine parent and staff response times and communication methods (email, phone, written communication) to understand what is working and what needs to be improved. (LPS and SEPAC/SEPTA)
- Look at how processes change from elementary school, middle school, and high school that may account for drops in parent satisfaction. (LPS)
- Publish communication paths for each school on a yearly basis so that parents know who to contact with questions and concerns, and how to contact them.
 - Communication pathways have been developed for all schools and will be updated annually.

SURVEY RESULTS

- Establish a communication path for parents to address concerns/questions (possibly anonymously) when LPS communication pathways don't succeed, or parents are not comfortable raising concerns with LPS staff members. (LPS and SEPAC/SEPTA)
- Educate parents on legal rights and communication paths for resolving questions and concerns outside of Lexington Public Schools. (SEPAC/SEPTA)

SURVEY RESULTS

What aspects of special education in the district do you think are the most effective for your child's development? (Question 18)

Our last two survey questions were open-ended. Question 18 asked parents to let us know their thoughts on what was effective about special education in Lexington Public Schools. We received 169 comments in this section. Common themes from parent feedback to this question included:

- Quality of staff
- Service Delivery
 - District-wide programs
 - Out-of-District placements
- Communication

As with most of the survey, parents gave highest praise to hardworking, caring and talented teachers. One parent commented, “Having a SPED teacher who is caring and demonstrates a positive attitude and will work as team with parents...Thank you for helping our child.” Another parent said, “The concept that we all work together as a team to create the best education plan for my child. Staff’s flexibility to modify given material to fit my child’s needs.”

Other parents provided feedback about the effectiveness of specific programs. According to one parent, “The fact that my child is in a district-wide program is critical for my child’s success, because the program puts in a place an effective baseline of services that can be individualized for my child.” For another parent, the key to effectiveness was “Small classroom size, one-on-one instruction, properly trained special education staff.”

SURVEY RESULTS

What are one or two changes to special education that could be made to better meet the needs of your child? (Question 19)

The last question of the survey asked parents to give their opinion on what changes could be better to best meet their child's needs. We received 175 responses to this question, and the common themes focused on:

- Communication
- Service Delivery
- Administration
- Staff Training/Resources

Regarding communication, one parent commented on the need for "more effective communication between staff and parents." Another parent commented on issues with the implementation of their child's service delivery: "My child had an IEP in place, but the services were sporadic and not actually given. The IEP was only on paper and not implemented."

Other parents pointed to tensions between parents and the administration. One parent commented on the need for "an administration that works better with the parents in representing the student's best interests. An IEP process where everyone was comfortable in representing the student's best interests."

Lastly, parents voiced their concerns about lack of resources and time to deliver services. As one parent stated, "Give teachers and counselors appropriate time to do what the IEP stipulates."

ONGOING PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

PROGRAM EVALUATIONS 2013

- Elementary (Care and PALS Programs)
- Middle School (Compass Program)
- High School (Multi Disciplinary Support Team MST)
- Intensive Learning Programs (Middle and High School)
- Developmental Learning Programs (Elementary and Clarke)

BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS DISTRICT- WIDE

- A new behavior specialist was added to the staff district-wide.
- A new process has been implemented to improve communication with staff and parents regarding behavior plans.
- 150 staff were trained or recertified in Crisis Prevention Institute—more will be trained by the end of the year.
- ABA coordinator and behavior specialist are working with all schools to improve building-based responses to potentially escalating behavioral issues.
- 60 Instructional Assistants have been trained in effective behavioral interventions.
- Mandatory annual training for Instructional Assistants.

BEST PRACTICES—ONGOING WORK

- A review of practices and procedures regarding transition services at the middle school and high school levels has been completed.
- A Transition Task Force made up of parents and staff has been established.
- Communication Pathways have been developed at all levels.
- On November 1, 2013: Lexington Public Schools hosted a ETS round table with SEPAC/SEPTA.
- February 1, 2013: Lexington Public Schools hosted a parent coffee entitled “Referral and Evaluation Process.” A second parent coffee is in the planning stages.
- The Special Education Manual is in the process of being updated.
- District-wide committees are looking at service delivery models across all domains.

ONGOING PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

- The Guidance Department is currently completing work on a 504 Procedural Manual and has instituted new procedures accordingly.
- The Student Services Web site is being rebuilt.
- Home/Hospital Tutoring Protocol is near completion.
- Guidance/ Program/Curriculum to begin this summer (2013).
- Coordinated Program Review Self-Assessment from the DESE (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) is currently being completed.

CONCLUSION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CONCLUSION

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

The goal of the SEPAC Parent Survey was to better understand the perspectives of parents of children with special needs regarding their children’s services and care, parent involvement, behavioral interventions, and communication. With response rates at 20% or higher in all categories, we are confident that this survey captures a valid snapshot of parent opinion that can be used to inform and prioritize SEPAC/SEPTA and LPS Special Education efforts, and to open an honest and open dialogue with LPS professionals and parents about areas for improvement. SEPAC/SEPTA looks forward to further cooperation and research on this topic, but most importantly to the actions that will continue the improvement in special education in Lexington.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Lexington SEPAC/SEPTA would like to thank all the stakeholders involved in this survey process. The SEPAC Survey Team members, made up of Lexington Public School parent volunteers, generously gave their time and expertise to help write the survey, analyze the results, and create the presentation and report materials. Linda Chase (Director of Student Services) and Diane Pelletier (Interim Director of Special Education), along with many other LPS Special Education team members, helped review the survey, provided district data to put our results in context, and worked collaboratively with us to generate recommendations based on the results. School Committee member Alessandro Alessandrini helped review the survey questions and worked with us to secure a place on the School Committee agenda.

CONCLUSION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The 298 parents who completed the survey and provided detailed comments gave us the information we needed to better understand parent needs, student needs, and areas of improvement.