



# 2015 Parent/Guardian Survey Report

## Summary of Findings

June 2016

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## Introduction

Background – In the late spring and early summer of 2015 (survey open May 4-July 12) the Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council conducted a follow-up survey to its 2011 and 2008 parent/guardian surveys. The 2015 survey consisted of 49 questions of which 38 mirrored the 2011 survey and 27 mirrored the 2008 survey. This allowed us to compare parent responses across the three surveys to identify changes in parent perception over seven years. In terms of survey response rate in 2015, 112 parents representing 144 special education students responded to the survey, an increase in respondents from 2011. This number represents more than 14% of the 979 special education students in the district at that time. Note: in this report, as in previous years, when we refer to the number of parents answering a question, we are actually referring to the total responses or number of children represented by individual survey respondents for each question.

Purpose – The AB Special Education Parent Advisory Council performed this parent/guardian survey to identify issues of concern to special education families and to help prioritize future goals for the organization. As a result the report focuses on potential areas of improvement. It is important to note that overall parents who took the survey reported moderate satisfaction with the programs and services provided by the district. Parent responses in 2015 were moderately more positive than those received in 2011, continuing the positive trend from 2008. We hope that our findings will be helpful to the district in its continuous effort to improve special education programs and services in the Acton-Boxborough regional schools.

## Survey Methodology

The 2015 AB Special Education Parent Advisory Council parent/guardian survey is very similar to the survey conducted in 2011 and the original survey conducted in 2008. Thirty-eight of forty-nine questions were the same or substantially similar to the 2011 survey. Most of the questions use a five choice Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree” with “Agree Somewhat,” “Neither Agree/Disagree,” and “Disagree Somewhat” in between. Respondents could also answer “Not Applicable” or leave the question blank. Almost all the questions were phrased so that an “Agree” answer indicated satisfaction and a “Disagree” response indicated dissatisfaction. Questions phrased in the opposite manner are noted in this report by a change in the color of the Likert scale answers.

The survey was distributed online and in limited hard copy and all responses were confidential by survey design. The survey was shared with families via the Student [then Pupil] Services email list, which includes almost all special education families in the school district. Survey reminders were sent to families periodically both by Student Services and the AB Special Education Parent Advisory Council through our respective email lists. We did not use any sampling methodologies to ensure that survey results reflected the entire special education community; consequently our survey results are subject to sampling bias.

The 2015 parent/guardian survey was divided into six main sections:

1. School and Parent Partnership (3 questions) – This section generally focused on **communication among parents, the child’s special education Team, and school administrators.**
2. Initial Assessment & the IEP (9 questions) – This section probed parents’ experiences with **initial special education assessment and the IEP development process.**
3. IEP Services & Progress Reporting (9 questions) – This section focused on the **scheduling and delivery of special education services outside the classroom and the effectiveness of progress reporting.**
4. Teachers and Administrators (5 questions) – This section asked questions about parents’ **experiences with special education administration, principals, regular classroom teachers, special education assistants, communication with those persons, and parents’ access to the classroom.**
5. Quality & Provision of Services (17 questions) – This section focused on **communication with special education staff, the classroom environment, and the scheduling and delivery of special education services outside the classroom.**
6. Bullying (6 questions) – This section asked questions about the schools’ **bullying prevention programs.**

In 2015 questions were scored and ranked in two different ways:

First, consistent with the 2011 and 2008 surveys, we used a scoring system which gave two points for a “Strongly Agree” answer, one point for an “Agree Somewhat” answer, no points for a “Neither” answer, negative one point for a “Disagree Somewhat” answer and negative two points for a “Strongly Disagree” answer. Thus a positive average score indicates satisfaction and a negative score indicates dissatisfaction. Questions phrased so that an “Agree” answer indicated dissatisfaction were scored in reverse when calculating averages for consistency.

Second, as in 2011, the 2015 survey questions were also scored using a “Net” number, which is the sum of the Agrees (somewhat and strongly) minus the sum of the Disagrees (somewhat and strongly). By providing total Agrees, Disagrees, and Net numbers the reader has more information about the distribution of the answers and the total number of question respondents. While the first scoring system discussed has the benefit of brevity – one number – it provides no information about distribution. For example, a “0” average could consist of all “Neither Agree or Disagree” answers or an equal number of “Strongly Agree” and “Strongly Disagree” answers, which would be an important distribution of answers to identify.

A review of survey respondents in 2015 and 2011 indicates the makeup of the two groups is similar. However, the number of responses that did not disclose the child’s school and primary disability more than doubled, which is unusual. A detailed comparison of survey respondents is included at the end of this report.

## Highlighted Observations

Positive Trend Continues – We are pleased to share that in most areas surveyed special education parents expressed a more positive perception of special education programs and services than they did in 2011. This is a trend that has continued and strengthened from 2008. Specifically, parents indicated material increased satisfaction with (a) the Team giving equal weight and consideration to outside specialists’ testing, reports, and recommendations, (b) the district explaining in writing why certain proposals discussed in the IEP Team meeting were rejected (though this is still a net negative response overall), (c) parents being given sufficient information to understand how their child’s progress and grades relate to regular education peer standards/grade level performance, (d) the sufficiency of special education programs and services for their child to achieve academic and social proficiency, and (e) staff ensuring that skills taught in pullout sessions are effectively generalized to the regular education classroom and across the child’s day.

Having said that, we believe the survey also identified some areas of concern within special education as perceived by parents. After review and discussion, the AB SpEd PAC leadership has identified three particularly interesting findings where the survey data points to possible areas of program improvement.

Key Observation #1 – Extended School Year & Before- and After-School Programming – Survey Question 36 asked, “If my child is at risk of regression over the summer due to his/her disability, my child was offered appropriate extended year programming.” In 2015 this survey question had the largest overall decrease of any survey question asked, dropping -.45 points from 2011. About half of parents taking the survey believed their child was eligible for extended year services (67 answered Q36). Examining the decline, a breakout by disability showed that parents of students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) (n=14) had the most negative response to this question (-.50 for SLD, +.43 for all) of all disability categories with five or more respondents, whereas in 2011 parents of students with SLD were substantially more positive (+1.33, n=9). There appears to have been a significant change in satisfaction with extended year programming for this subgroup of students.

While the overall survey question score of +.43 indicates that more parents agree than disagree with this statement, almost 40% of respondents disagreed either somewhat or strongly. This change from 2011 causes concern for the Special Education Parent Advisory Council as students at risk of substantial regression over the summer need academic and social support to maintain their skills. This survey data seems to support anecdotal evidence. We have heard from parents over the last two years that their children were not offered/provided adequate extended year programming despite being at risk for regression. This finding may also indicate that the qualification criteria or process for determining who is eligible for extended school year

programming has changed in recent years. Regardless, a significant percentage of parents do not believe the district is providing extended school year services to all of the students who require it. (See [www.doe.mass.edu/pqa/ta/esyp\\_qa.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa/ta/esyp_qa.html) for additional information regarding extended school year programs.)

Survey Question 34 stated, “The school ensures that after-school and extracurricular activities are accessible to students with disabilities by providing needed supports.” While the net positive responses increased in 2015 by +.16 from 2011, the aggregate response is still barely above neutral at +.05, which is the fourth lowest aggregate score of all the survey questions asked. Note: a response rate of 0 would indicate that parents neither agree nor disagree with the statement. When we analyzed the data by disability, parents of students with Autism expressed the highest level of disagreement regarding access to after-school and extracurricular activities (-.78, n=18).

The issues of extended year and before- and after-school programming were raised in both our 2011 and 2008 survey reports as highlighted observations. In 2015, parent satisfaction in these areas is still below the average parent satisfaction reported on other survey topics. However, satisfaction has improved versus 2011 in three of the four questions related to these topics even though the overall question scores are still quite modest. That being said, it does not appear that enough progress has been made to resolve parents’ ongoing concerns regarding children’s access to before- and after-school programs and extended year programming. Consistent with prior surveys, the number of responses to these questions is lower than many survey questions, presumably because not all students with disabilities are at risk of substantial regression around IEP goals and objectives/benchmarks over the summer nor choose to participate in before- and after-school activities.

Key Observation #2 – Home-School Communications – Two survey Questions (Q2 and Q3) focused on home-school communications. Question 2 stated, “I feel I can speak freely with district staff and disagree with my child’s special education program or services without negative consequences for me or my child.” In 2015 more parents strongly agreed with this statement than in 2011 or 2008, which is a positive trend. The aggregate score on this question was +.99 (n=135), up +.25 from our 2011 survey. However, 21% of the survey respondents (28) still disagreed with this statement somewhat or strongly. While this percentage is down from 24% in 2011, it is exactly the same proportion of respondents who felt this way in 2008. The Special Education Parent Advisory Council continues to be troubled that one in five parents surveyed expressed concerns about negative consequences to their child or themselves if they disagree with the administration regarding their child’s special education needs. Open, honest communication is the cornerstone of true partnership, which both parents and administrators strongly desire. In light of this group’s fear of reprisal, it is difficult to know how to reach parent members to better understand their concerns.

Survey Question 3 stated, “I feel that communications from special education administrators to parents are open, honest and transparent.” In 2015 more parents strongly agreed with this statement than in 2011, which is a positive trend. The aggregate score on this question was +.81 (n=135), up +.35 from our 2011 survey. However, like the question above, 21% of survey respondents still disagreed with this statement somewhat or strongly. This percentage is down from 33% in 2011. While the numbers have improved since 2011, the Special Education Parent Advisory Council continues to be concerned that one in five parents surveyed questions the honesty and transparency of communications to parents from special education administrators.

When analyzing the data by age/school, the Out of District (OOD) and preschool parents reported the lowest levels of satisfaction with both Question 2 and 3. On survey Question 2, parents of OOD students answered this question with a modestly positive response just above neutral (+.19), which was significantly lower than all parents together (+.99). Preschool parents were in moderate agreement with the statement (+.44), though still measurably lower than all parents (+.99). On survey Question 3, parents of OOD students answered this question with a negative response (-.19), which was significantly lower than all parents together (+.81). Preschool parents were neutral on this question (+.00), which was significantly below all parents (+.81).

When examining the data by disability, parents of students with Autism reported the lowest level of satisfaction on both questions when averaged together, followed closely by parents of students with a Neurological disability. On Question 2, parents of students with Autism answered with a moderately positive score (+.62) and parents of students with a Neurological disability answered similarly (+.64); however, this is lower than all parents together (+.99). On Question 3, parents of students with Autism responded in a modestly positive manner (+.34), as did parents of students with a Neurological disability (+.45); however, parents of students with Developmental Disabilities answered negatively (-.14) in contrast to all parents together (+.81). Children who have not yet been diagnosed with Autism may be classified by the school as having Neurological disabilities or Developmental Delay, so there is likely overlap in disabilities represented by these three categories of students.

In the Open Response section of the 2015 survey parents commented quite often on communication related topics, both positively and negatively. The large number of comments on this topic suggests that parents place a high value on timely and effective communication. Please see the included selection of open-ended parent comments beginning on page 20 to gain a fuller understanding of parents’ perspectives on home-school communication in the Acton-Boxborough school district.

Key Observation #3 – Out of District Parent Concerns – When analyzing the 2015 survey data by parent group, we discovered that parents of Out of District (OOD) students were significantly less satisfied than any other parent group (Q13), although their overall question score was modestly positive at +.41 (n=17). In contrast the overall question score of all other parents was



+1.08 (n=124). In addition, parents of OOD students expressed a lower level of satisfaction across a broad range of topics surveyed (40 out of 49 survey questions). At the time the survey was conducted there were 100 children in Out of District placements. Sixteen identified OOD students were reflected in the survey responses we received. This represents a 16% response rate for the OOD parent/guardian group, which was higher than the general survey response rate of 14%. We note that this percentage may not reflect all survey respondents with OOD students as we experienced an increased number of families who declined to identify their child's school/placement in the 2015 survey.

As noted above in Key Observation 2, Out of District parents had the lowest confidence in their ability to speak freely with the district without negative consequences (Q2) and the lowest confidence that special education administrators' communications were open, honest, and transparent (Q3). It is difficult for families and the district to partner effectively on a child's behalf when fundamental trust is not in place. The difference in Out of District parents' experiences was also particularly pronounced in the areas of: responsiveness to parent contact/concerns (Q27), quick and effective problem resolution (Q22), provision of an IEP/Amendment within 5-10 days (Q9), inclusion of all Team recommendations/agreements in the IEP (Q10), and the offering of new/different strategies when a child's IEP goals were not met (Q19). The difference in OOD parent responses to these questions varied from -.91 to -1.43 compared to other parents' responses, so the difference in experience by this community was quite pronounced.

## Other Observations

We are pleased to relate that in most areas surveyed special education parents expressed a more positive perception of special education programs and services than they did in 2011. This continues the positive trend noted when comparing the 2011 and 2008 survey results. However, there continue to be a few areas of continuing concern among special education parents notwithstanding progress made over the last four years.

Progress Reporting – In 2011 this was the top highlighted survey observation. Parents' satisfaction with progress reporting about their child with special needs decreased materially from 2008 to 2011, moving against the modestly positive overall survey trend. In 2011 fully 48% of parents disagreed with the statement, "I am given sufficient information to understand how my child's progress and grades relate to regular education peer standards/performance for my child's current grade level" (Q18). We are pleased to share that 2015 results (+.42, n=118) represent a significant improvement in parent satisfaction of +.72, which is excellent progress. However, we also note that 32% of survey respondents still disagree somewhat or strongly with this statement. If fully a third of parents do not understand how their child's progress and grades relate to regular education peer standards/grade level performance, there continues to be a strong need to institute a progress reporting system that meaningfully integrates regular and special education reporting to district families. In addition, Question 17 stated, "The assessment mechanisms in the IEP and reported in progress reports are sufficient so that I can monitor and understand my child's progress and/or lack of progress towards attaining IEP goals." The change in parent satisfaction was +.57 from 2011 (2015 result was +.60, n=117), which is solid progress. However, we note that 25% of survey respondents still disagree with this statement somewhat or strongly.

Difference Narrowed between Specific Learning Disability and Autism Families – The 2008 survey identified a wide disparity of satisfaction among parents of children with a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) who were highly satisfied with district programs and services and parents of children with Autism (ASD) who were highly dissatisfied with programs and services. In 2011 this disparity was still evident, but at a greatly diminished level, mostly as a result of parents of students with Autism expressing more favorable opinions than they did in 2008. In 2015 there are still a few areas where the opinions of parents diverge materially regarding children in these two disability categories. Interestingly, parents now express equal levels of overall satisfaction with the services their children are receiving per Question 13 (ASD subgroup score +.90, SLD score +.93). Parents of students with Autism reported more improvement in satisfaction over the last year than parents of students with SLD on Question 14 (ASD +.21, SLD +.08 where improvement year over year is +1, no change is +0, decline is -1).

However, there remain sharp differences among the two parent groups on some topics. Parents of students with Autism were less satisfied with communication questions (Q2, Q3). On the other hand, parents of students with SLD were less satisfied with the disability knowledge of their child's principal (Q23, ASD +.65, SLD -.30) and the IEP Team's efforts to provide services in the classroom (Q5, ASD +1.21, SLD +.65).

Social and Emotional Support – In the 2015 survey we asked a new question (Q43) about social and emotional support as follows, “In addition to academic support do you believe the district has provided your child with appropriate social and emotional support/peer groupings/services necessary to meet your child's social and emotional needs?” 37.4% of parents (n=91) responded no to this question, which is more than a third of all respondents. An analysis by schools indicates parents of students Out of District have the largest percentage of “no” answers to this question. Appropriate social and emotional support for children is necessary to ensure their emotional well-being and ability to access the general curriculum. The Special Education Parent Advisory Council is concerned by the high percentage of survey respondents who do not believe this aspect of their child's education is being met.

Bullying – In 2011 parents expressed a relatively neutral opinion on the schools' bullying programs. This year parents expressed a modestly positive opinion, which was an improvement over the 2011 results. When averaging the results of the five bullying questions (Q45-Q49), the overall score improved +.30 points from +.15 in 2011 to +.45 in 2015. Yet, in 2015, 41% of survey respondents (34 of 82 respondents) indicated that their child had experienced bullying over the last two years (Q44). Since the district reports very few bullying incidents, it is difficult to reconcile parent experiences with district bullying statistics.

IEP Rejection – In the 2015 survey we asked two new questions (Q40 and Q41) regarding the partial or full rejection of an IEP. Question 40 asked, “Have you partially or fully rejected an IEP in the last two years?” 26.5% of survey respondents answered yes to this question (n=113). Question 41 asked, “If you have rejected any part of an IEP in the last two years, were you able to resolve the rejected portions of the IEP in a timely fashion?” 61.7% of survey respondents answered no (n=34). Since generally parents expressed a high level of satisfaction around other IEP related questions, such as receiving IEPs in a timely manner (+1.10), it appears that parents who reject any portion of an IEP have difficulty promptly resolving areas of disagreement with the district.

Class Size – In 2011 Question 33 dealing with class size garnered the largest number of dissatisfied parents and the lowest score of all the survey questions. In 2015 parents expressed less concern about class size (2015 score of +.04 vs. 2011 score of -.53), but it still remains one of the lowest scores in the survey. Parent opinions about the impact of class size vary greatly by disability. There was a range of 1.83 from parents of children with Communication disabilities scoring this question at +.83 to parents of children with Intellectual disabilities scoring this

question at -1.00. We do not have a plausible theory for why there is such a large divergence of opinion among parents of children with different disabilities.

Lack of Knowledge Regarding IEP – In the 2015 survey we asked a new question (Q42) about teacher knowledge of student IEPs. This question read, “In the last two years have you had a general education teacher or special education teacher say that they didn’t know your child was on an IEP/504 or that they didn’t know your child required a specific service or support described in your child’s IEP/504?” 8.2% of survey respondents answered yes to this question. Since students on 504s are not part of special education, parents of students on 504s were not reached by this survey unless they also had a child on an IEP. Consequently, the percentage of families who have experienced this difficulty are likely underrepresented by our survey findings. This survey finding supports anecdotal parent reporting on this issue. The AB Special Education Parent Advisory Council encourages the district to adopt an IEP/504 sign-off protocol to ensure that all teachers working with a student have received and read the child’s IEP prior to the beginning of each school year and within five days of a newly signed IEP/Amendment.

## Evidence Supporting Highlighted & Other Observations

Positive Trend Continues – As noted earlier in the report, special education parents expressed a more positive perception of special education programs and services than they did in 2011, continuing a long-term positive trend from 2008. This year there were two ways of measuring the change in satisfaction among special education parents – 1) a direct question (Q14) and 2) comparing 2015 and 2011 answers to the same survey questions.

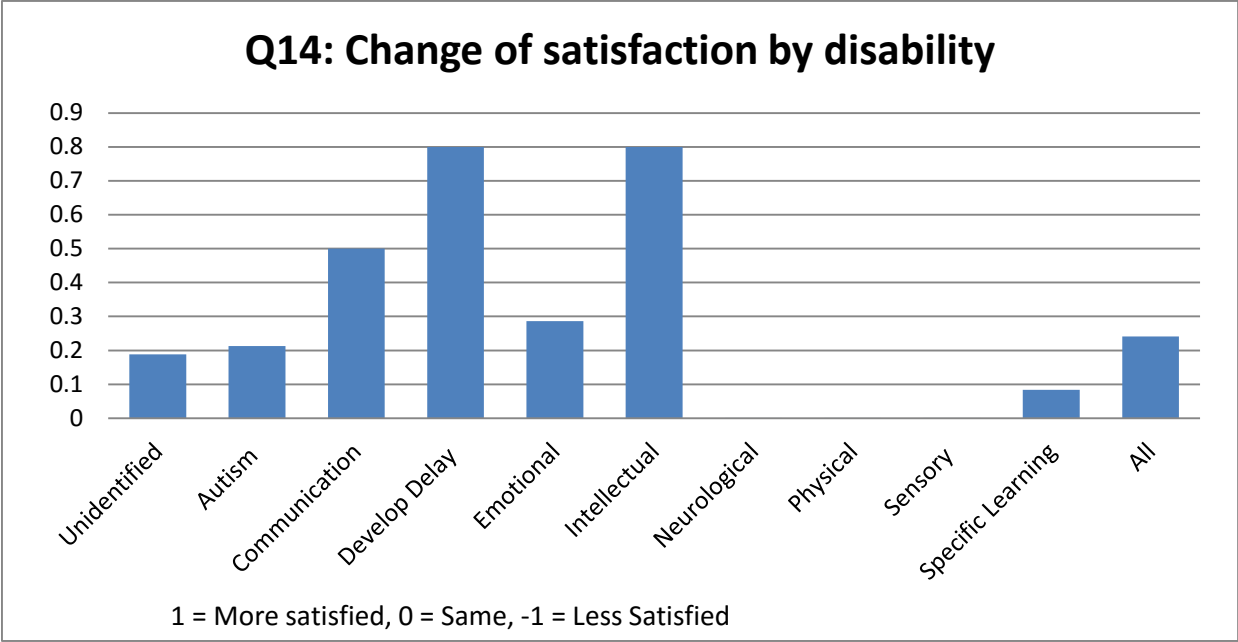
Method 1 – Question 14 is shown below. The number of parents expressing more satisfaction is more than twice the number of parents who expressed less satisfaction, which suggests a meaningful improvement over the previous year.

### Question 14 & Parent Responses

Are you more or less satisfied this year than last year? (Respond N/A if you've only been in the district for a year or if your child has only received special education services for a year or less.)  
More Satisfied =+1, About the Same =0, Less Satisfied=-1

<b>More Satisfied</b>	<b>Less Satisfied</b>	<b>About the Same</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
43	19	43	23

However, as the chart below demonstrates, the improvement in satisfaction is not balanced across disabilities. Parents of children with Developmental Delay and Intellectual disabilities reported the highest level of improvement. No disability group reported a decline in satisfaction, although three disability categories expressed “about the same” level of satisfaction as they did the previous year. Most of the highest and lowest scores reported are in categories with five or fewer parent responses so it is difficult to know how representative these responses are.



**Q14 Respondent Count**

Unidentified	Autism	Communication	Develop Delay	Emotional	Intellectual	Neurological	Physical	Sensory	Specific Learning	All
16	28	6	5	7	5	10	2	2	24	105

Method 2 – The second approach used to identify trends was to compare 2015 and 2011 responses to the same survey questions. There were 38 questions that appeared in both surveys. The 2015 scores were on average +.34 points higher using a system that averages answers with a range of +2 for the most positive answer, “Strongly Agree,” to -2 for “Strongly Disagree.” We view a shift of this magnitude across 38 questions as indicating that parents in 2015 are significantly more satisfied than they were in 2011. In comparison, the improvement in 2011 from 2008 was only +.08. Following are the five questions with the largest score improvement. Note: while Question 11 improved by +.82 from 2011, it is still a negative score overall (-.02), indicating that parents continue to disagree that rejected proposals made at IEP Team meetings are adequately documented in the final IEP sent to parents.

We see that the most progress was made in some areas that parents have expressed great concern about in the past. For example, the weight given outside evaluations (Q20) was mentioned as an Other Concern in our 2011 survey report and the sufficiency of information parents receive about their student’s progress in relation to regular classroom performance (Q17) was a Key Observation in our 2011 report. While we appreciate the meaningful improvement this year in parent satisfaction regarding progress reporting (Q17), we do note that the overall score of +.42 is still in the lower range of scores for all survey questions.

## The Five Survey Questions with the Largest Score Improvement from 2011

#	<u>Likert Scale Questions (reverse Likert highlighted)</u>				<u>2015</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>2015</u>
		<u>Positives</u>	<u>Negatives</u>	<u>Net Positive</u> <u>(Negative)</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Change</u> <u>from 2011</u>	<u>Responses</u> <u>ex N/A</u>
21	The Team gave equal weight and consideration to outside specialists' testing, reports and recommendations. This includes evaluations such as a full neuropsych, speech/language or occupational therapy evaluation. All important recommendations made by outside specialists were discussed and incorporated into my child's IEP, as appropriate.	57	18	39	0.80	0.96	79
12	If the district rejects proposals made at the IEP Team meeting, the rejected options are explained in the written notice I receive from the district when it sends me the proposed IEP.	17	16	1	-0.02	0.83	42
18	I am given sufficient information to understand how my child's progress and grades relate to regular education peer standards/performance for my child's current grade level.	67	38	29	0.42	0.72	118
38	When my child has behavior concerns, the school considers whether or not the behavior was a manifestation of his/her disability before determining the appropriate course of action. (Respond N/A if your child does not have behavior issues at school.)	31	17	14	0.37	0.66	63
15	The special education program and services my child receives from the school district are sufficient for her/him to achieve academic and social proficiency.	76	33	43	0.65	0.65	116

### Analysis of Question 18 by Disability

Special education parents are always interested in whether the services their child is receiving have been effective in helping the child achieve grade-level proficiency. Question 18 asked parents about this: "I am given sufficient information to understand how my child's progress and grades relate to regular education peer standards/performance for my child's current grade level." The responses to this question were interesting not only for the change in score but also for the distribution of scores by disability. The +.72 improvement in Q18 is a very positive development. In both 2015 and 2011 parents seemed to have a strong opinion regarding the adequacy of services provided. In 2011 there were 43 positive and negative responses and only nine neutral "Neither Agree or Disagree" answers. This "twin peak" result was unusual. In 2015 there were more positive than negative answers (67 positive, 38 negative) and 13 neutral responses, which resulted in both the overall score improvement and a reduction of the twin peak effect. Our review of Q18 by disability indicated that the two largest groups of respondents – Autism and Specific Learning Disabilities – both scored a bit below the average. Disabilities with a small number of responses were at the extremes, with Emotional and Intellectual disabilities on the high side and Developmental Delay and Sensory on the low side. The chart below shows the number of respondents per disability category and the average question score by disability.

## Question 18 by Disability

<u>Disability</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Count (n)</u>
Unidentified	0.58	15
Autism	0.23	31
Communication	0.57	8
Develop Delay	-0.14	7
Emotional	0.83	7
Intellectual	1.60	6
Neurological	0.18	11
Physical	1.33	3
Sensory	0.00	2
Specific Learning	0.29	28
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>0.42</b>	<b>118</b>

Key Observation #1 – Extended School Year and Before- & After-School Programming – The issues of extended year and before- and after-school programming were raised in both our 2011 and 2008 survey reports as highlighted observations. In 2015 parent satisfaction in these areas is still below the average parent satisfaction reported on other survey topics. However, we are pleased to share that satisfaction has improved versus 2011 in three of the four questions related to these topics even though the overall question scores are still quite modest. Question 36, asking whether or not children at risk of regression were offered appropriate summer programming, was the exception to this positive trend.

On Question 36 the score declined by -.45 from 2011, the largest single decline of any survey question asked. While the overall survey question score of +.43 indicates that more parents agree than disagree with this statement, almost 40% of respondents disagreed either somewhat or strongly. This is a significant change from 2011 and one that causes concern for the Special Education Parent Advisory Council as students at risk of substantial regression over the summer need academic and social support to maintain their skills. That a significant percentage surveyed do not believe the district is providing extended school year services to their children who require it seems to support the anecdotal reporting of parents over the last two years. We note that consistent with prior surveys, the number of responses to these four questions is lower than many survey questions, presumably because not all students with disabilities are at risk of regression over the summer nor choose to participate in before- and after-school activities.

The table below shows the responses to the four questions related to extended year and before- and after-school programming plus two baseline questions for comparison. We selected Question



15 about the sufficiency of special education services (score +.65, also +.65 improvement over 2011) and Question 13 about parent satisfaction with special education services (score +.99, not asked in 2011) as our baseline questions. When you compare Question 34, regarding the accessibility of after-school and extracurricular programs (score +.05, +.15 improvement over 2011) and Question 35 regarding the accessibility of Community Education programs (score +.29, +.33 improvement over 2011) to the two baseline questions, it is apparent that Q34 and Q35 are trending upward but at a significantly lower rate and lower absolute level of satisfaction than the baseline questions (Q15 and Q13).

Extended Year, Before & After School Programming Questions

<u>#</u>	<u>Likert Scale Questions</u>	<u>% Disagree</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Change to 2011</u>	<u>Responses ex N/A</u>
34	The school ensures that after-school and extracurricular activities are accessible to students with disabilities by providing needed supports.	36.9%	0.05	0.15	65
35	Community Education ensures that before/after-school programs, school vacation and summer programs are accessible to students with disabilities by providing needed supports.	23.6%	0.29	0.33	55
36	If my child is at risk of regression over the summer due to his/her disability, my child was offered appropriate extended year programming. (Respond N/A if your child is not at risk of regression over the summer.)	38.8%	0.43	-0.45	67
37	I am satisfied with the summer/extended year programming my child receives from the school district. (Respond N/A if your child does not receive summer services.)	35.2%	0.31	0.24	54

General Satisfaction Baseline Questions

#	<u>Likert Scale Questions</u>	% Disagree	Score	Change to 2011	Responses ex N/A
15	The special education program and services my child receives from the school district are sufficient for her/him to achieve academic and social proficiency.	28.4%	0.65	0.65	116
		%			
	<b>Dissatisfied</b>				
13	How satisfied are you with the special education services your child is receiving?	17.7%	0.99	n.a.	124

Parent Comments – There were a handful of parent comments dealing with summer and extended year programming, most indicating simply that program expansion was necessary.

For example, regarding positive changes in the district:

*“The positive improvement for my younger child is the opportunity for an extended year. He needs extra help over the summer and is now going to be receiving it. I wish this happened long ago with him and should have been mandatory for my older son who never had services beyond the standard school year.”*

And regarding anticipated changes not seen:

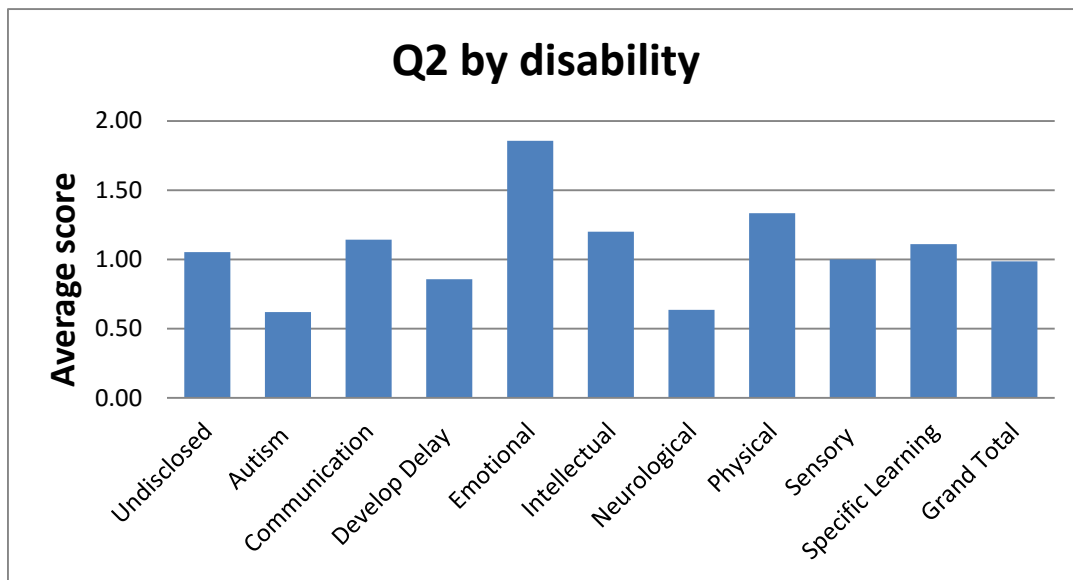
*“Lack of expansion of the integrated summer/extended year programming for students on the Spectrum with social pragmatic challenges (including Comm. Ed. afternoons)”*

Key Observation #2 – Home-School Communications – The 2015 survey asked two questions focused on communication. In prior survey reports we have focused on the responses to Question 2, “I feel I can speak freely with district staff and disagree with my child’s special education program or services without negative consequences for me or my child.” We are pleased that in 2015 more parents strongly agree that they can communicate with the district without potential consequences than in prior surveys. The average score is up +.25 from 2011, a material improvement. However, we are concerned that 28 parents (21% of the 135 respondents) continue to disagree with this statement at least somewhat. The table below shows the breakout of all responses to Q2 in 2015 and 2011.

Comparison of Question 2 Responses from 2015, 2011 and 2008

<u>Q2</u>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree Somewhat</b>	<b>Neither Agree/Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree Somewhat</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Score Change from 2011</b>
2015	72	28	7	17	11	0.99	0.25
2011	39	31	8	14	10	0.74	
2008						0.71	

An analysis of Question 2 by disability indicated that parents of children with Autism and Neurological disabilities had the most reservations about communications with the district. As highlighted by previous surveys, parents of children with Autism have historically expressed more concern regarding communications than other parents. However, this year’s average question response of +.62 is an improvement over the 2011 average of +.35 which in turn was an improvement over the 2008 average of -.25. We note that children who have not yet been diagnosed with Autism may be classified by the school as having a Neurological disability, so there is likely overlap in disabilities represented by these two categories of students. When looking at this question by parent group, Out of District parents and preschool parents reported the lowest levels of satisfaction.

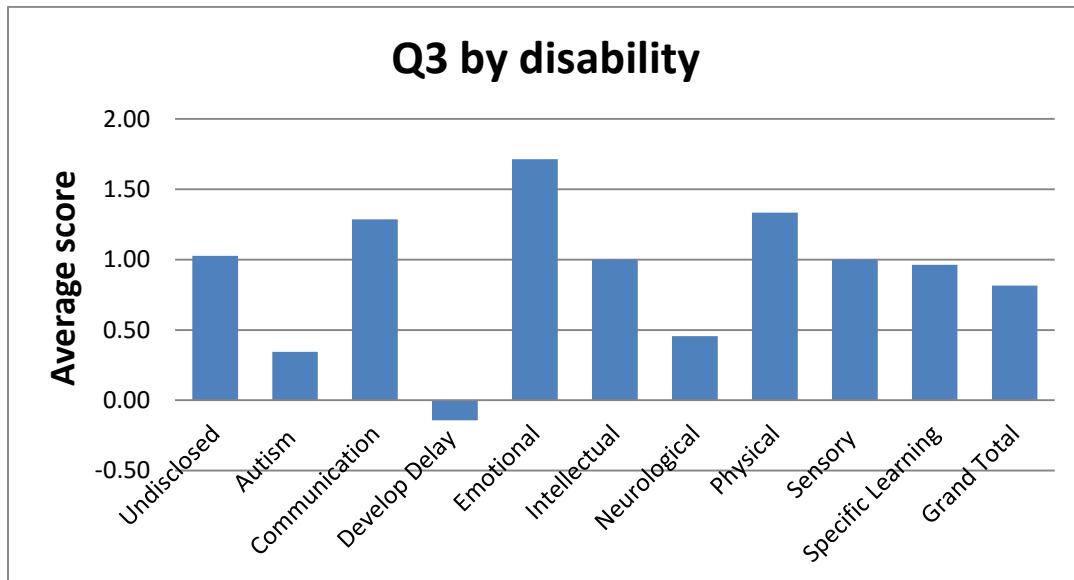


**Respondent Count**

Undisclosed	Autism	Communication	Develop Delay	Emotional	Intellectual	Neurological	Physical	Sensory	Specific Learning	Grand Total
37	29	7	7	7	5	11	3	2	27	135

### Question 3 Responses by Disability

The second communication question in the survey (Q3) said, “I feel that communications from special education administrators to parents are open, honest and transparent.” An analysis of Question 3 by disability indicated that parents of children with a Developmental Delay had the lowest average response (-.14), followed by parents of children with Autism (+.34) and Neurological disabilities (+.45). These response rates are measurably lower than the overall average response rate for Q3 (+.81) as indicated in the chart below.



#### Respondent Count

Undisclosed	Autism	Communication	Develop Delay	Emotional	Intellectual	Neurological	Physical	Sensory	Specific Learning	Grand Total
37	29	7	7	7	5	11	3	2	27	135

Parent Comments Related to Communication – In addition to Questions 2 and 3, we note that there were a large number of parent comments in the Open Response section of the survey regarding communication, both positive and negative, which suggests that this is an area of great interest to parents. We have selected a representative sample of responses to each of the five open-ended questions asked in the survey.

Question 1 – What three things do you think the district does best in regards to special education?

*“Love my son's teacher and classroom aides. We have a good relationship and really good communication about what's going on with him.”*

*“Good communications and response to questions. Excellent coordination between special ed. and classroom teacher.”*

*“Classroom teacher was an excellent source of support and communication. Special education admin team has been excellent: organized, clear and prompt with communications.”*

Question 2 – What three things do you think the district does least well in regards to special education?

*“Not enough communication between special educators and parents. Not enough communication among regular ed. and special educators about my child's classroom work, homework.”*

*“Communicating what is happening during special education services. How are goals specifically implemented? Communications for extended year program were challenging: what is the curriculum? who are the teachers? even, does my child need to bring a water bottle...lots of disorganization I'd like to mention a fourth: why aren't special education activities and PAC meetings included with the regular school communications? Why aren't meetings and events included in newsletters and district calendars?”*

*“Very poor communication, follow through, returning calls or emails. Very poor at including parent as part of the team.”*

*“Communication within admin and from admin to parents- inconsistent and often unreliable.”*

Question 3 – What positive improvements have you seen in the district over the last two years relating to special education? (Such as school culture, professional development, decreased bullying, accessibility to teachers or extracurricular activities, program/service enhancements, improved practices, etc.)?

*“My 7th grader has been having a much better year than his 6th grade year. I find the communication, flexibility, and attitude of creatively meeting his needs to be refreshing and helpful.”*

*“I appreciate the efforts of and communication between my child's educational team.”*

Question 4 – What anticipated changes have you not seen over the last two years that you had hoped to?

*“Timely response to communications, including returning phone calls and email messages.”*

*“Parents are equal team members. The importance of open communication with parents cannot be underestimated. Labeling parents as difficult is not a solution.”*

*“Better communication between admin and teachers, between admin and parents. Greater transparency in general. More honest dialogue from admin.”*

*“More communication over the school year with IEP team to track child's progress/regression, etc. “*

Question 5 – Any other comments or suggestions you'd like to add.

*“My experience with both of my children at the elementary school level is that special educators and administrators tend to minimize issues parents bring up. When parents persist, they are labeled as ‘difficult.’ This gives the district freedom to leave real issues unaddressed (with impunity) and puts an enormous burden on parents to try to get things resolved. This is a pervasive issue in this district.”*

*“We have also found that special educators are reluctant to communicate openly and often negatively impact communication between parents and regular education teachers, damaging parents' confidence.”*

*“As the Superintendent's report indicated there are major problems and concerns reported from both the District staff and parents. The noted lack of communication, transparency and trust is both alarming and disheartening. It is clear that the special education administration requires significant changes and new leadership personnel.”*

Key Observation #3 – Out of District Parent Concerns – Parents of Out of District students expressed the lowest level of satisfaction of all parent groups in the 2015 survey (Q13). Our scoring system indicated an average score of +.41 for OOD parents in contrast to a +1.08 score for all other parents. Parents of OOD students also showed a lower level of satisfaction across a broad range of topics surveyed (40 out of 49 survey questions). Out of District parents in aggregate had the lowest confidence in their ability to disagree with the district without adverse consequences (Q2) and the lowest confidence that district communications were open, honest, and transparent (Q3). Responses to these two communication questions indicate whether or not there is a foundation of trust on which collaboration can be built. Additionally, our review of individual survey questions suggested that OOD parents had a very different experience than other parents in the areas of problem resolution (Q22 and Q19), responsiveness to parent concerns (Q27), and the timely receipt of complete IEPs (Q9 and Q10). We believe differences 1.00 point or more in average score indicate a substantial difference in satisfaction and parent experience.

Below is a comparison of the average scores of OOD survey responses with other parent responses on selected questions. Taken in combination, these findings depict a divergent group experience that merits further exploration. Note: there were 100 children Out of District at the time our survey was conducted. We received responses from 16% of those families willing to identify themselves as OOD. This percentage may not reflect the actual number of parents responding with children OOD as 38 respondents refused to disclose their child's school—more than triple those declining to identify a school from 2011.

## Comparison of OOD Responses to All Others

#	<b>Likert Scale Questions (reverse Likert highlighted)</b>	<b>Average</b>			<b>Count (n)</b>		
		<b>OOD</b>	<b>All Others</b>	<b>Diff.</b>	<b>OOD</b>	<b>All Others</b>	<b>Total</b>
2	I feel I can speak freely with district staff and disagree with my child's special education program or services without negative consequences for me or my child.	0.19	1.09	-0.91	16	118	134
3	I feel that communications from special education administrators to parents are open, honest and transparent.	-0.19	0.95	-1.14	16	118	134
22	Based on my experiences the special education administration responds quickly and effectively to solve problems.	-0.35	1.08	-1.43	17	94	111
27	District staff and administrators responded to my concerns (whether communicated by phone, email or meeting) in a timely (within 1-2 days) and professional manner.	-0.18	1.12	-1.29	17	79	96
9	The school district routinely provides me with a complete IEP or IEP Amendment within 5-10 days after my child's Team meeting.	0.00	1.28	-1.28	17	106	123
10	The IEP Summary/Meeting Notes I receive at the end of the Team meeting and the full IEP I receive later include all of the recommendations and agreements made by parents and school staff at the Team meeting.	0.12	1.37	-1.25	17	84	101
19	If my child's IEP goals were not met, the district offered new/different strategies or additional support to assist my child in meeting his/her IEP goals.	-0.73	0.47	-1.20	15	57	72

## Other Observations

Difference Narrowed between Specific Learning Disability and Autism Families – The 2008 survey identified a wide disparity of satisfaction between parents of children with a Specific Learning Disability (SLD), who were highly satisfied with district programs and services, and parents of children with Autism (ASD), who were highly dissatisfied with programs and services. In 2011 this disparity was still evident, but at a greatly diminished level, mostly as a result of autism parents expressing more favorable opinions than they did in 2008. In 2015 there are still a few areas where parent opinions diverge materially regarding children in these two disability categories. Interestingly, however, parents now express equal levels of overall satisfaction with the services their children are receiving per Question 13 (ASD subgroup score +.90, SLD score +.93). Parents of students with Autism reported more improvement in satisfaction over the last year than parents of students with SLD on Question 14 (ASD +.21, SLD +.08 where improvement year over year is +1, no change is +0, decline is -1).

However, there remain sharp differences among the two groups on some topics. Parents of students with Autism were less satisfied with communication questions (Q2 and Q3). On the other hand, parents of students with SLD were less satisfied with the disability knowledge of

their child’s principal and the IEP team’s efforts to provide services in the classroom (Q23 and Q5). The table below shows eight questions with meaningful differences between the two parent groups.

Selected Large Differences Among Parents of Autism and Specific Learning Disability Children

#	<u>Likert Scale Questions (reverse Likert highlighted)</u>	Autism	Specific Learning	All	n	SLD less ASD
1	I am treated as an equal member of my child's IEP/504 Team.	0.76	1.11	1.17	135	-0.35
2	I feel I can speak freely with district staff and disagree with my child's special education program or services without negative consequences for me or my child.	0.62	1.11	0.99	135	-0.49
3	I feel that communications from special education administrators to parents are open, honest and transparent.	0.34	0.96	0.81	135	-0.62
10	The IEP Summary/Meeting Notes I receive at the end of the Team meeting and the full IEP I receive later include all of the recommendations and agreements made by parents and school staff at the Team meeting.	0.28	1.30	1.16	102	-1.02
22	Based on my experiences the special education administration responds quickly and effectively to solve problems.	0.40	0.82	0.86	112	-0.42
33	I believe that current class sizes negatively impact my child's ability to make effective progress in the general education classroom/curriculum without additional supports.	-0.44	0.19	0.04	95	-0.62
23	I believe my child's school principal is informed regarding my child's disability and knows what types of supports are necessary for my child's social and academic success.	0.65	-0.30	0.14	99	0.95
5	The IEP Team routinely considers providing as many educational services in the general education classroom as my child can access before deciding to pull him/her out for special education services.	1.21	0.65	0.96	105	0.56

Note: Question 33 is a reverse Likert question. Scoring is reversed; e.g., a “Strongly Agree” is -2 and the % Disagree statistic is the percentage of the “Agree Strongly” and “Agree Somewhat” answers.

Parent Comments – Notwithstanding the improvement in satisfaction among parents of children with Autism, the sharpest criticisms of district practices came from this group of families. The following parent comments were selected to give readers an understanding of the depth of their concerns.

*“We moved to this district for the schools only to be deeply discouraged upon hearing in EI and from clinicians in Boston that Acton is a difficult district for students with autism. Our experience bore this out; we had to watch our student fail in aftercare to prove need for a full-day placement because there wasn't room in that class at the integrated preschool our first year. Placement was determined five months before aging out of EI and NOT after the team had convened and written goals. Our child regressed badly, into a complete shutdown. ... We dread the transition to the elementary schools.”*



*“Another issue which has been ongoing since preschool is the district's programmatic design of services for autism and developmental delays. A one-size-fits-all approach and a set of specialized programs have only impeded, and in some cases, harmed my child. In hind sight, I wish I had never placed my son on an IEP and sent him to the integrated preschool. I think he might have been better off receiving supplementary speech and language and OT services privately as well as attended a private preschool with typically developing peers.”*

*“We need a paradigm shift with how we approach autism spectrum disorders, particularly among high-functioning students. The recent BSEA decision should be viewed as a sign to the district that the way it approaches these students is inadequate to meet their needs and have them be successful ~alongside typical peers~ long-term.”*

*“Assistants should be trained to support these students across the educational day.”*

*“[A] vigorous program to provide supported social skills practice across all settings is critical for the children with autism and social disabilities. These children must have supported practice at a high repetition in all settings in order to adaptively generalize the speech pragmatics training they receive – if they don't get that then the District must abandon trying to teach children with autism and place them Out of District where they will have a more appropriate educational setting. This is the only way for children whose main disability is in adaptively applying their learned knowledge to a variety of settings. The separation between regular education training and teaching and special education training and teaching is a fundamentally flawed approach that does not serve the autistic community.”*

*“1) We lag far behind with regard to working with students with autism and providing appropriate social supports in the LRE. Pullouts should not be the starting point.*

*2) The overall push seems to be to cut or flatter families out of services as much as possible. This includes obfuscating ‘academic’ and ‘educational’ need. Academics are one part of the life of the student.”*

Bullying – In 2011 parents expressed a relatively neutral opinion on the schools’ bullying programs. This year parents expressed a modestly positive opinion, which was an improvement over the 2011 results. When averaging the results from the five bullying questions (Q45-Q49), the overall score improved +.30 points from +.15 in 2011 to +.45 in 2015. In 2011 almost one in five parents (16 of 85 respondents, 19% of total respondents) disagreed with Question 48, “My child feels safe from bullying and supported by the adults in his or her environment.” In 2015 that was down to about one in 12 parents (7 of 86 respondents disagreed, 8% of total respondents). The overall score of +.93 is good on an absolute basis and represents a +.40 improvement over the 2011 score. Yet, in 2015, 43% of survey respondents (35 of 82 respondents) indicated that their child had experienced bullying over the last two years (Q44). Since the district reports very few bullying incidents, it is difficult to reconcile parent experiences with district reporting.

Summary of Bullying Questions

#	Likert Scale Questions (reverse Likert highlighted)	% Disagree	Responses ex N/A	Score	Score Change
44	My child has experienced bullying by classmates on the school campus, on the bus, during school field trips/activities, or via the internet.	43%	82	0.23	0.58
45	Any bullying my child has experienced at school or on the bus has been addressed promptly and effectively by school staff.	24%	45	0.53	0.50
46	My child's disability has been taken into consideration when investigating/responding to bullying incidents.	31%	36	0.31	0.05
47	The school has taught my child how to respond appropriately to bullying at school and to whom he/she should report bullying incidents.	15%	79	0.52	0.30
48	My child feels safe from bullying at school and supported by the adults in his/her school environment (including lunch, hall and recess monitors).	8%	86	0.93	0.40
49	My school has an effective bullying prevention and intervention program in place with a clear reporting structure and consequences that have been shared with all families.	18%	92	0.37	0.25

Note: Question 38 is a reverse Likert question. Scoring is reversed; e.g., a “Strongly Agree” is -2 and the % Disagree statistic is the percentage of the “Agree Strongly” and “Agree Somewhat” answers.

Parent Comments – Parents expressed their views on bullying in the open response section of the survey. Some comments recognized progress on bullying while others pointed to areas of weakness.

On the progress the district has made:

*“While bullying has not been an issue over the past several years, we feel the education provided by the district about it has been effective. Our high schooler knows what it is and what to do if he witnesses or experiences bullying.”*

On what the district might do better:

*“I feel like the bullying conversation (not just at AB, but nationwide) is challenging. I hear the kids talk about bullying in reference to anything someone else is doing that they don't like -- they know the word, but using it loosely. (‘He's bullying me’ then when I suss out what happened, it was just ‘He said he didn't like a game I like’ or something similar.) I also feel like there's discussion about sped kids being the target of bullying, but not enough about sped kids' behavior control and how they can \*look like\* the bully without really being a ‘mean kid.’”*

*“Addressing bullying issues. When my child was bullied and harassed, the bullies were never communicated with. Instead my child was expected to handle it on her own, even after asking for help. She was later removed from the classroom setting at the suggestion of the school system.”*

*“[Find] ways to reduce bullying on the regular bus. Kids who are high functioning (as well as typical kids) get bullied quite a bit. This is the best or the worst place to learn social skills. If the bus has camera, it should be used.”*

*“-- For kids who have disability, but still are able to go on regular bus ...  
Find ways to reduce bullying on bus. Maybe show them some videos to explain them how to behave with other children on bus. Just moving them to CASE transportation is not the solution.”*

Class Size – In 2011 Question 33 dealing with class size garnered the largest number of dissatisfied parents and the lowest score of all the survey questions. In 2015 parents expressed less concern about class size (2015 score of +.04 versus 2011 score of -.53) but it still remains one of the lowest scores in the survey. The following table shows that parent opinions about the impact of class size vary greatly by disability. The range of parent responses varied by 1.83 points with parents of children with Communication disabilities scoring this question at +.83 and parents of children with Intellectual disabilities scoring this question at -1.00. There was only one parent comment about class size, leaving us without a theory for the divergence in opinion among parents of children with different disabilities.

### Q 33 by Disability

<u>Disability</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Count (n)</u>
Unidentified	-0.25	8
Autism	-0.60	25
Communication	0.83	6
Develop Delay	0.80	5
Emotional	-0.50	6
Intellectual	-1.00	4
Neurological	0.30	10
Physical	-0.50	2
Sensory	0.00	2
Specific Learning	0.19	27
Grand Total	0.04	95

## Ranked Survey Results & Observations

Survey Summary – The average of all survey answers in 2015 was +.66 indicating that survey respondents were moderately positive (closer to “Agree Somewhat” than “Neither Agree or Disagree”) about the topics surveyed. There were 38 questions that were common to both the 2011 and 2015 surveys. For this subgroup of questions the 2015 average score was +.65 vs. +.33 in 2011.

Strongest Positive Responses – In general, parents expressed strong positive opinions in the 2015 survey with respect to having children’s services delivered without delay, having specific and measurable goals in the IEP, receiving all of the services called for in the IEP, being treated as an equal member of the IEP Team, believing that teachers are knowledgeable regarding children’s disabilities, and receiving the IEP in a timely fashion.

Strongest Negative Responses – The strongest negative response in the survey was to Question 6 (-.54, n=80), which states “The Team explored both home based services, such as parent training or private tutoring, and assistive technology options for including my child in general education activities and included these supports in the IEP as appropriate.” In addition, parents disagreed that “If the district rejects proposals made at the IEP Team meeting, the rejected options are explained in the written notice I receive from the district when it sends me the proposed IEP” (Q12, -.02, n=42).

Question Scoring – The first sort of the survey seeks to identify issues for which there is a strongly positive or negative opinion held by parents. In the following table, survey questions are sorted by the number of “Net” Agrees or Disagrees (Disagrees have a negative net value). The “Net” Agree number is calculated by adding the “Strongly Agree” and “Agree Somewhat” responses and then subtracting the “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree Somewhat” responses. A large number of “Net” Agrees indicates a strong favorable aggregate opinion.

Drawback of Net Agree Scoring – One of the drawbacks of this “Net” Agree approach is that in some circumstances it is more important to focus on the negatives, notwithstanding that a strong majority of respondents have a positive opinion. One such question is Question 2: “I feel I can speak freely with district staff and disagree with my child’s special education program or services without negative consequences for me or my child.” Although a large majority of parents agreed with this statement, 21% of the survey respondents (n=135) still disagreed with this statement somewhat or strongly. It is concerning to the Special Education Parent Advisory Council that one in five parents feels inhibited from communicating honestly with the Administration due to fear of reprisal either to themselves or their child.

## Questions Sorted by Number of Agrees less Disagrees

Survey questions are categorized as Likert, Other, or Demographic.

Reverse Likert are highlighted. Reverse Likert questions ask responders to agree or disagree about a negative issue, outcome or event.

Score is calculated as:  $(2*SA+AS-DS-2*DA) / \text{Responses ex N/A}$ . Reverse Likert questions use reverse signs (e.g. SA = -2).

Agrees are Strongly Agree + Agree Somewhat. Disagrees are Strongly Disagrees + Disagree Somewhat.

Net Agrees is Agrees less Disagrees except Reverse Likert questions which is Disagrees - Agrees.

#	<u>Likert Scale Questions (reverse Likert highlighted)</u>	Agrees	Disagrees	Net Agrees	Responses ex N/A	Score
1	I am treated as an equal member of my child's IEP/504 Team.	109	18	91	135	1.17
8	The IEP goals and objectives for my child established by the Team are specific and measurable. (For example, "my child will use appropriate eye contact with peers and teachers 50% of the time as observed by the special educator in a natural setting.")	99	16	83	121	1.20
30	The district has not delayed implementation of my child's IEP due to lack of classroom space or personnel.	88	6	82	100	1.54
9	The school district routinely provides me with a complete IEP or IEP Amendment within 5-10 days after my child's Team meeting.	99	21	78	124	1.10
29	To the best of my knowledge, over the last two years the school has provided my child with all the special education services and hours of service documented in my child's IEP.	87	13	74	107	1.20
2	I feel I can speak freely with district staff and disagree with my child's special education program or services without negative consequences for me or my child.	100	28	72	135	0.99
3	I feel that communications from special education administrators to parents are open, honest and transparent.	99	29	70	135	0.81
24	I believe my child's classroom teacher is knowledgeable regarding my child's disability and knows what types of supports are necessary for my child's social and academic success.	86	16	70	107	1.15
25	I feel I have adequate direct access to the individuals working most closely with my child throughout the school day, such as classroom assistants, special service providers, and/or classroom teachers.	82	17	65	107	0.96
10	The IEP Summary/Meeting Notes I receive at the end of the Team meeting and the full IEP I receive later include all of the recommendations and agreements made by parents and school staff at the Team meeting.	82	19	63	102	1.16
22	Based on my experiences the special education administration responds quickly and effectively to solve problems.	85	25	60	112	0.86
32	I am informed of and understand the in-class and pullout interventions my child regularly receives (from the classroom assistant, speech/language specialist, occupational therapist, recess monitor, etc.).	72	12	60	93	1.01
5	The IEP Team routinely considers providing as many educational services in the general education classroom as my child can access before deciding to pull him/her out for special education services.	80	21	59	105	0.96
11	The proposed IEP sometimes includes information or decisions that were not discussed at the Team meeting.	22	77	55	123	0.89
17	The assessment mechanisms identified in the IEP and reported in progress reports are sufficient so that I can monitor and understand my child's progress and/or lack of progress towards attaining IEP goals.	78	29	49	117	0.60

#	<u>Likert Scale Questions (reverse Likert highlighted)</u>	Agrees	Disagrees	Net Agrees	Responses ex N/A
48	My child feels safe from bullying at school and supported by the adults in his/her school environment (including lunch, hall and recess monitors).	56	7	49	86
27	District staff and administrators responded to my concerns (whether communicated by phone, email or meeting) in a timely (within 1-2 days) and professional manner.	70	23	47	97
15	The special education program and services my child receives from the school district are sufficient for her/him to achieve academic and social proficiency.	76	33	43	116
31	Staff ensures that skills taught to my child in pullout sessions are effectively generalized to the regular education classroom and across the child's school day.	58	15	43	88
28	I am notified promptly by staff when my child is experiencing difficulties in school whether they are social, academic, emotional or behavioral in nature.	68	26	42	103
21	The Team gave equal weight and consideration to outside specialists' testing, reports and recommendations. This includes evaluations such as a full neuropsych, speech/language or occupational therapy evaluation. All important recommendations made by outside specialists were discussed and incorporated into my child's IEP, as appropriate.	57	18	39	79
16	The special education pullout services my child receives (such as speech/language or occupational therapy) are scheduled so that my child doesn't miss important academic time in the regular education classroom to the maximum extent possible.	58	20	38	89
4	Before my child was referred for special education, the district tried to meet my child's needs within the regular education program. (For example, by providing modified teaching strategies, reading and/or math supports, behavioral supports, counseling, etc.)	48	19	29	78
18	I am given sufficient information to understand how my child's progress and grades relate to regular education peer standards/performance for my child's current grade level.	67	38	29	118
47	The school has taught my child how to respond appropriately to bullying at school and to whom he/she should report bullying incidents.	41	12	29	79
49	My school has an effective bullying prevention and intervention program in place with a clear reporting structure and consequences that have been shared with all families.	42	17	25	92
20	My request(s) to have the regular education teacher complete an Independent Education Evaluation (IEE) Teacher Report Form as part of a private or outside assessment were honored. This includes forms such as the BASC-2, Connors or Brief. All forms were completed and returned to me or the private evaluator within three weeks from the time I delivered the forms to the school. (Respond N/A if you haven't requested an Independent Education Evaluation in the past two years.)	25	4	21	36

#	<u>Likert Scale Questions (reverse Likert highlighted)</u>	Agrees	Disagrees	Net Agrees	Responses ex N/A	Score
45	Any bullying my child has experienced at school or on the bus has been addressed promptly and effectively by school staff.	28	11	17	45	0.53
7	If an assistive technology evaluation was conducted for my child the district completed that evaluation within 30 days and held a Team meeting to discuss the results within 45 days of receiving my written permission to evaluate. (Respond N/A if you haven't requested an assistive technology evaluation in the past two years.)	21	7	14	34	0.65
38	When my child has behavior concerns, the school considers whether or not the behavior was a manifestation of his/her disability before determining the appropriate course of action. (Respond N/A if your child does not have behavior issues at school.)	31	17	14	63	0.37
36	If my child is at risk of regression over the summer due to his/her disability, my child was offered appropriate extended year programming. (Respond N/A if your child is not at risk of regression over the summer.)	38	26	12	67	0.43
35	Community Education ensures that before/after-school programs, school vacation and summer programs are accessible to students with disabilities by providing needed supports.	24	13	11	55	0.29
26	If I requested an observation of my child's current or proposed program or services (either for myself or an outside specialist), the district scheduled the observation in a timely fashion and allowed a sufficient duration of time to fully evaluate the program.	16	6	10	28	0.54
37	I am satisfied with the summer/extended year programming my child receives from the school district. (Respond N/A if your child does not receive summer services.)	29	19	10	54	0.31
19	If my child's IEP goals were not met, the district offered new/different strategies or additional support to assist my child in meeting his/her IEP goals.	35	27	8	73	0.22
33	I believe that current class sizes negatively impact my child's ability to make effective progress in the general education classroom/curriculum without additional supports.	35	41	6	95	0.04
46	My child's disability has been taken into consideration when investigating/responding to bullying incidents.	17	11	6	36	0.31
23	I believe my child's school principal is informed regarding my child's disability and knows what types of supports are necessary for my child's social and academic success.	34	29	5	99	0.14
34	The school ensures that after-school and extracurricular activities are accessible to students with disabilities by providing needed supports.	27	24	3	65	0.05
44	My child has experienced bullying by classmates on the school campus, on the bus, during school field trips/activities, or via the internet.	35	37	2	82	0.23
12	If the district rejects proposals made at the IEP Team meeting, the rejected options are explained in the written notice I receive from the district when it sends me the proposed IEP.	17	16	1	42	-0.02
6	The Team explored both home based services, such as parent training or private tutoring, and assistive technology options for including my child in general education activities and included these supports in the IEP as appropriate.	24	45	-21	80	-0.54

## Questions Sorted by Score Change from 2011

Survey questions are categorized as Likert, Other, or Demographic.

Reverse Likert are highlighted. Reverse Likert questions ask responders to agree or disagree about a negative issue, outcome or event.

Score is calculated as:  $(2*SA+AS-DS-2*DA) / \text{Responses}$  ex N/A. Reverse Likert questions use reverse signs (e.g. SA = -2).

Highest 5 scores are highlighted in green, lowest 5 scores are highlighted in red.

#	<u>Likert Scale Questions (reverse Likert highlighted)</u>	Average Score			Total Replies		Net Agrees	
		<u>2015</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2011</u>
21	The Team gave equal weight and consideration to outside specialists' testing, reports and recommendations. This includes evaluations such as a full neuropsych, speech/language or occupational therapy evaluation. All important recommendations made by outside specialists were discussed and incorporated into my child's IEP, as appropriate.	0.80	-0.16	0.96	79	56	39	-4
12	If the district rejects proposals made at the IEP Team meeting, the rejected options are explained in the written notice I receive from the district when it sends me the proposed IEP.	-0.02	-0.85	0.83	42	33	1	-15
18	I am given sufficient information to understand how my child's progress and grades relate to regular education peer standards/performance for my child's current grade level.	0.42	-0.30	0.72	118	93	29	-30
38	When my child has behavior concerns, the school considers whether or not the behavior was a manifestation of his/her disability before determining the appropriate course of action. (Respond N/A if your child does not have behavior issues at school.)	0.37	-0.29	0.66	63	42	14	-4
15	The special education program and services my child receives from the school district are sufficient for her/him to achieve academic and social proficiency.	0.65	0.00	0.65	116	95	43	0
31	Staff ensures that skills taught to my child in pullout sessions are effectively generalized to the regular education classroom and across the child's school day.	0.90	0.26	0.64	88	72	43	16
20	My request(s) to have the regular education teacher complete an Independent Education Evaluation (IEE) Teacher Report Form as part of a private or outside assessment were honored. This includes forms such as the BASC-2, Connors or Brief. All forms were completed and returned to me or the private evaluator within three weeks from the time I delivered the forms to the school. (Respond N/A if you haven't requested an Independent Education Evaluation in the past two years.)	1.03	0.41	0.62	36	29	21	7
19	If my child's IEP goals were not met, the district offered new/different strategies or additional support to assist my child in meeting his/her IEP goals.	0.22	-0.36	0.58	73	64	8	-18
44	My child has experienced bullying by classmates on the school campus, on the bus, during school field trips/activities, or via the internet.	0.23	-0.35	0.58	82	75	2	-16
33	I believe that current class sizes negatively impact my child's ability to make effective progress in the general education classroom/curriculum without additional supports.	0.04	-0.53	0.57	95	85	6	-25
17	The assessment mechanisms identified in the IEP and reported in progress reports are sufficient so that I can monitor and understand my child's progress and/or lack of progress towards attaining IEP goals.	0.60	0.03	0.57	117	91	49	4



#	Likert Scale Questions (reverse Likert highlighted)	Average Score			Total Replies		Net Agrees	
		2015	2011	Change	2015	2011	2015	2011
30	The district has not delayed implementation of my child's IEP due to lack of classroom space or personnel.	1.54	1.01	0.53	100	80	82	46
45	Any bullying my child has experienced at school or on the bus has been addressed promptly and effectively by school staff.	0.53	0.04	0.49	45	53	17	2
24	I believe my child's classroom teacher is knowledgeable regarding my child's disability and knows what types of supports are necessary for my child's social and academic success.	1.15	0.67	0.48	107	95	70	42
23	I believe my child's school principal is informed regarding my child's disability and knows what types of supports are necessary for my child's social and academic success.	0.14	-0.33	0.47	99	86	5	-17
48	My child feels safe from bullying at school and supported by the adults in his/her school environment (including lunch, hall and recess monitors).	0.93	0.53	0.40	86	85	49	36
3	I feel that communications from special education administrators to parents are open, honest and transparent.	0.81	0.46	0.35	135	103	70	24
8	The IEP goals and objectives for my child established by the Team are specific and measurable. (For example, "my child will use appropriate eye contact with peers and teachers 50% of the time as observed by the special educator in a natural setting.")	1.20	0.85	0.35	121	95	83	48
16	The special education pullout services my child receives (such as speech/language or occupational therapy) are scheduled so that my child doesn't miss important academic time in the regular education classroom to the maximum extent possible.	0.62	0.27	0.35	89	77	38	20
1	I am treated as an equal member of my child's IEP/504 Team.	1.17	0.84	0.33	135	105	91	53
35	Community Education ensures that before/after-school programs, school vacation and summer programs are accessible to students with disabilities by providing needed supports.	0.29	-0.04	0.33	55	50	11	1
7	If an assistive technology evaluation was conducted for my child the district completed that evaluation within 30 days and held a Team meeting to discuss the results within 45 days of receiving my written permission to evaluate. (Respond N/A if you haven't requested an assistive technology evaluation in the past two years.)	0.65	0.35	0.30	34	20	14	3
47	The school has taught my child how to respond appropriately to bullying at school and to whom he/she should report bullying incidents.	0.52	0.22	0.30	79	78	29	-16
2	I feel I can speak freely with district staff and disagree with my child's special education program or services without negative consequences for me or my child.	0.99	0.74	0.25	135	102	72	46
49	My school has an effective bullying prevention and intervention program in place with a clear reporting structure and consequences that have been shared with all families.	0.37	0.12	0.25	92	83	25	11
32	I am informed of and understand the in-class and pullout interventions my child regularly receives (from the classroom assistant, speech/language specialist, occupational therapist, recess monitor, etc.).	1.01	0.77	0.24	93	75	60	35

#	Likert Scale Questions (reverse Likert highlighted)	Average Score			Total Replies		Net Agrees	
		2015	2011	Change	2015	2011	2015	2011
37	I am satisfied with the summer/extended year programming my child receives from the school district. (Respond N/A if your child does not receive summer services.)	0.31	0.07	0.24	54	42	10	3
11	The proposed IEP sometimes includes information or decisions that were not discussed at the Team meeting.	0.89	0.69	0.20	123	91	55	-33
25	I feel I have adequate direct access to the individuals working most closely with my child throughout the school day, such as classroom assistants, special service providers, and/or classroom teachers.	0.96	0.77	0.19	107	93	65	45
29	To the best of my knowledge, over the last two years the school has provided my child with all the special education services and hours of service documented in my child's IEP.	1.20	1.01	0.19	107	86	74	49
34	The school ensures that after-school and extracurricular activities are accessible to students with disabilities by providing needed supports.	0.05	-0.11	0.16	65	65	3	-4
28	I am notified promptly by staff when my child is experiencing difficulties in school whether they are social, academic, emotional or behavioral in nature.	0.67	0.52	0.15	103	91	42	29
5	The IEP Team routinely considers providing as many educational services in the general education classroom as my child can access before deciding to pull him/her out for special education services.	0.96	0.81	0.15	105	83	59	38
4	Before my child was referred for special education, the district tried to meet my child's needs within the regular education program. (For example, by providing modified teaching strategies, reading and/or math supports, behavioral supports, counseling, etc.)	0.65	0.52	0.13	78	58	29	20
6	The Team explored both home based services, such as parent training or private tutoring, and assistive technology options for including my child in general education activities and included these supports in the IEP as appropriate.	-0.54	-0.66	0.12	80	59	-21	-21
46	My child's disability has been taken into consideration when investigating/responding to bullying incidents.	0.31	0.19	0.12	36	42	6	4
27	District staff and administrators responded to my concerns (whether communicated by phone, email or meeting) in a timely (within 1-2 days) and professional manner.	0.89	0.85	0.04	97	85	47	45
10	The IEP Summary/Meeting Notes I receive at the end of the Team meeting and the full IEP I receive later include all of the recommendations and agreements made by parents and school staff at the Team meeting.	1.16	1.12	0.04	102	97	63	63
26	If I requested an observation of my child's current or proposed program or services (either for myself or an outside specialist), the district scheduled the observation in a timely fashion and allowed a sufficient duration of time to fully evaluate the program.	0.54	0.54	0.00	28	26	10	7
9	The school district routinely provides me with a complete IEP or IEP Amendment within 5-10 days after my child's Team meeting.	1.10	1.18	-0.08	124	97	78	64
36	If my child is at risk of regression over the summer due to his/her disability, my child was offered appropriate extended year programming. (Respond N/A if your child is not at risk of regression over the summer.)	0.43	0.88	-0.45	67	51	12	22
22	Based on my experiences the special education administration responds quickly and effectively to solve problems.	0.86			112		60	

## Selected Parent Open-Ended Responses

Parents expressed concern on a variety of issues in the open-ended survey questions. The following raised forth points we feel are especially worth consideration.

On the evaluation process:

*“Need to make sure that evaluations that cross school years include both the previous year teacher and the current year teacher in discussions. Getting our child on an IEP was initially delayed by the current year teacher’s mistaken assessment of our child’s performance. Not ill intentioned at all – the previous year teacher had a better perspective based on experience.”*

*“The evaluation process takes time and if a child is assessed as needing services in the second half of the year as late as March, the child effectively has to wait until the start of the next year to receive services. This is what happened in our case. Then at the beginning of the next year the teacher didn’t think the situation was as serious as it was and services were delayed again. It took almost a year to get an IEP in place.”*

On the need for executive functioning training and support:

*“We are not doing an effective job of teaching our kids how to learn, study, plan and organize. It is done on a case by case, subject by subject, teacher by teacher basis, or not done at all. Everyone is ‘creating the wheel’ instead of adopting a cohesive, quality, consistent program/curriculum that every student should have access to – whether they are special ed or not.”*

*“\*Doesn’t know how to teach executive functioning skills effectively. Doesn’t have a sequential skill-based program for elementary, junior high & high school students”*

*“I was hoping students who have executive processing deficits could receive more effective instruction in learning centers and academic support centers.”*

On requesting to observe:

*“Understand the whole child – my daughter comes home crying most days since starting this IEP. I’ve asked to visit but told I was not allowed to due to confidentiality.”*

On the need for professional development for all staff:

*“NOT protecting IEP students from biased, unprofessional and often negative comments from LC staff who are supposed to be supportive of children with disabilities. This includes mockery of my son’s efforts in class in front of other students.”*

*“Staff sometimes uses less appropriate ways to persuade/guide behavior, my child needs continual therapeutic approach.”*

*“Lack of continuing professional education seems to exasperate things – special educators don’t know the IEP process and/or disabilities well and are defensive, many regular educators don’t make connections to disabilities.”*

*“More of an interest and knowledge with mental health disorders.”*

On the need for parent education and support:

*“It’s not always clear what the appropriate steps are and what special educators are ‘allowed’ to bring up with parents, and what parents can/need to ask about.”*

*“I am not 100% aware of what additional services my elementary school child gets, for instance what is he doing when he is pulled from the class or when an assistant comes in to class.”*

## Summary of Survey Respondents

The tables below compare 2011 and 2015 survey respondents' children by school and by disability. The number of respondents not disclosing their child's primary disability doubled from 18 to 36 and the number of respondents' children not disclosing their child's school more than tripled from 12 to 38. The number of children reporting attendance at an Out of District (OOD) school more than doubled from 7 to 16 children.

### COMPARISON OF 2011 AND 2015 SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY PRIMARY DISABILITY AND BY SCHOOL

	<u>By Primary Disability</u>				<u>By School</u>				
	<u>2011</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>Change (#)</u>	<u>Change (%)</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>Change (#)</u>	<u>Change (%)</u>	
Undisclosed	18	36	18	100%	Undisclosed	12	38	26	217%
Autism	22	29	7	32%	ABRHS	19	23	4	21%
Communication	5	7	2	40%	Blanchard	n.a.	2	n.a.	n.a.
Develop Delay	8	7	-1	-13%	Conant	14	6	-8	-57%
Emotional	9	7	-2	-22%	Douglas	7	5	-2	-29%
Intellectual	1	5	4	400%	Gates	5	9	4	80%
Neurological	16	11	-5	-31%	McCarthy	5	7	2	40%
Physical	2	3	1	50%	Merriam	9	8	-1	-11%
Sensory	1	2	1	100%	OOD	7	16	9	129%
Specific Learning	23	28	5	22%	Other	4	2	-2	-50%
					Preschool	7	9	2	29%
					R.J. Grey	16	10	-6	-38%
Grand Total	105	135	30	29%	Grand Total	105	135	30	29%