



# Updates & Preliminary Mini Survey Findings

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SPRING 2017 PRESENTATION TO THE ABRSC

# Our Mission

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*To ensure understanding, respect, support,  
and the appropriate education of all children in our community.*

The Special Education Parent Advisory Council's duties under state law include:

“advising the district on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities and meeting regularly with school officials to participate in the planning, development and evaluation of the school district's special education programs.”

- Provide a network for parents and a forum for sharing and discussing interests and concerns
- Maintain dialogue with the broader community
- Collaborate with the school community to improve student outcomes
- Promote and enhance communication between families and administrators

# Parent Support & Education

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- Cohosted Basic Rights workshop with Student Services and Maynard and Sudbury SEPACs
- Cosponsored with Student Services and ABRSD Jessica Minahan on anxiety and Sarah Ward on executive functioning
- Held monthly parenting support group
- Maintained parent-to-parent listserv & Facebook page
- Fielded dozens of parent information and support requests
- Attended regional workshops and state-level conferences to bring back resources, including:
  - Asperger/Autism Network Annual Connections Conference
  - Federation for Children with Special Needs Visions of Community Conference
  - TASH & MFOFC Partnering with Families Across Cultures
  - Mass Families Organizing for Change Advocacy Bootcamp
  - Mass Families Organizing for Change Family Leadership Series

# 2017 Mini Survey

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- Goal to follow up on certain 2015 parent/guardian survey findings:

*Issues with transparency and trust in communication*

*Trend of increasing positive perception of special education programs and services*

*Extended School Year (ESY) eligibility and programming concerns*

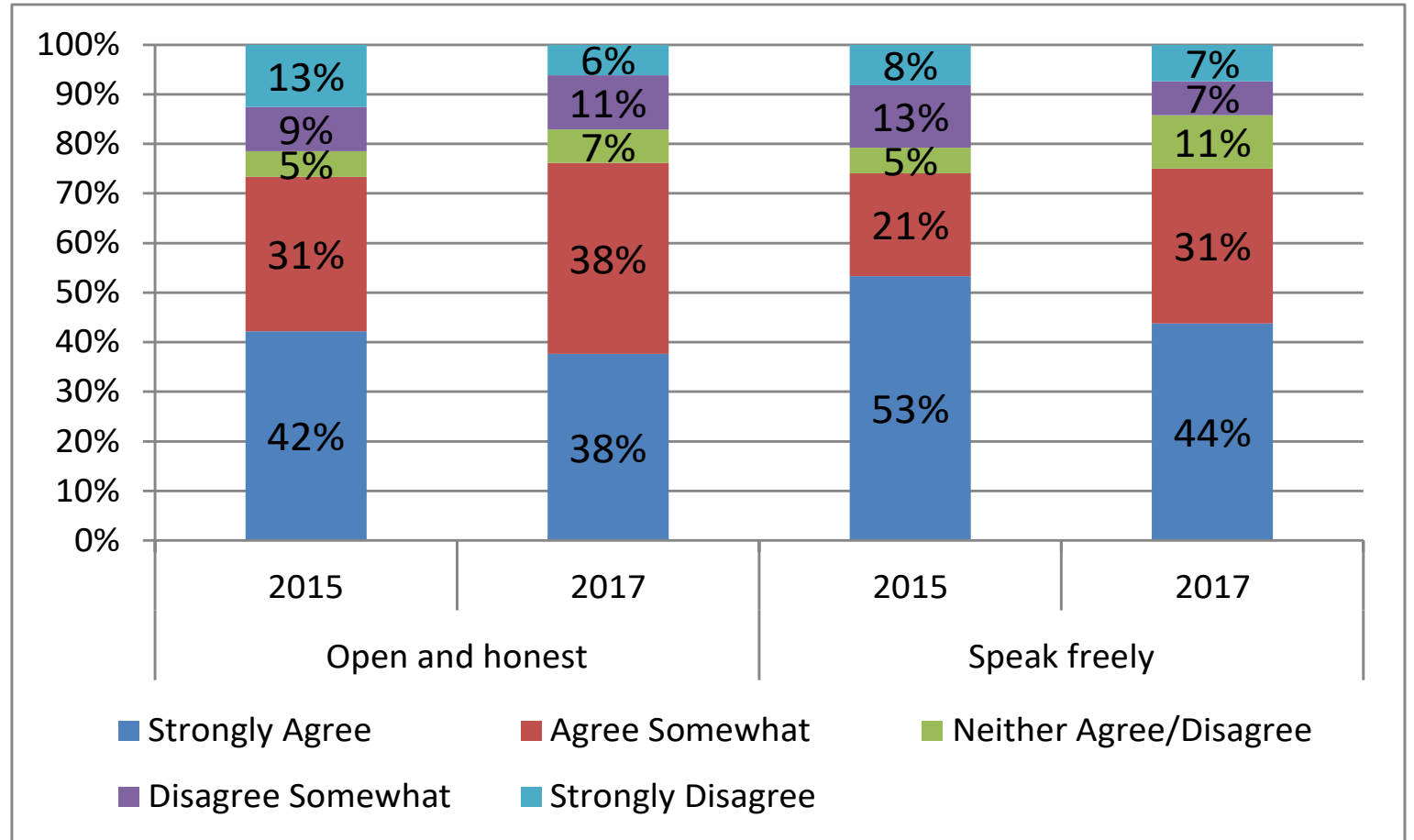
*Preschool and Out of District families' perceptions of trust, communication*

- 8 questions; 5 mirrored the 2015 survey, 2 demographic, 1 open-ended
- 309 respondents representing 362 students with special education needs or ~39% of ABRSD Students with Disabilities based on the 933 headcount from DESE (10/1/16)
- Up from 135 responses representing ~14% of SwD to the 49-question 2015 survey
- Full report to be published on PAC site

# Preliminary Findings – Communication

“I feel that communications from special education administrators to parents are open, honest, and transparent.”

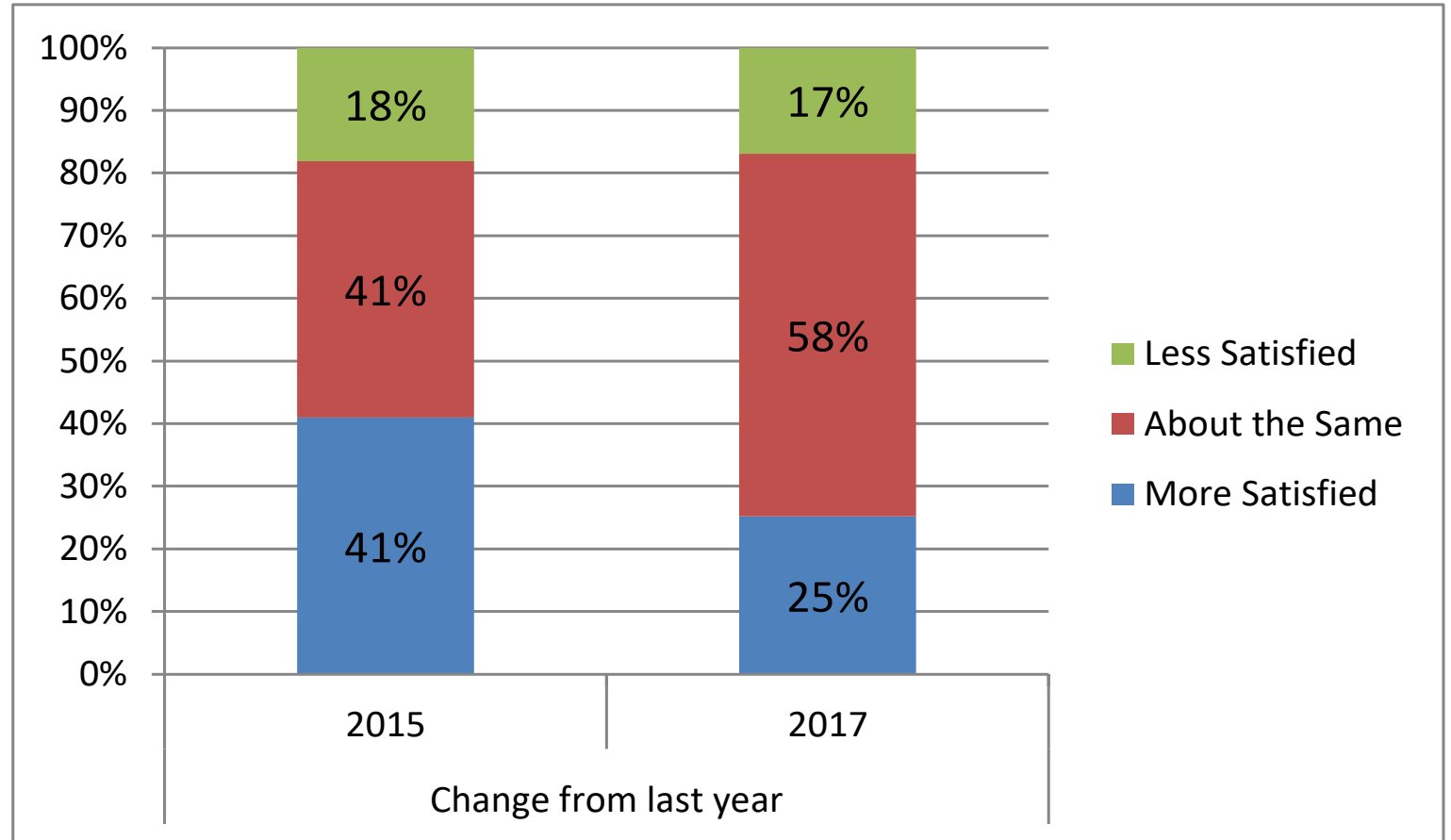
“I feel I can speak freely with district staff and disagree with my child’s special education program or services without negative consequences for me or my child.”



# Preliminary Findings – Satisfaction Trend

“Are you more satisfied this school year (2016-2017) than last year (2015-2016)?”

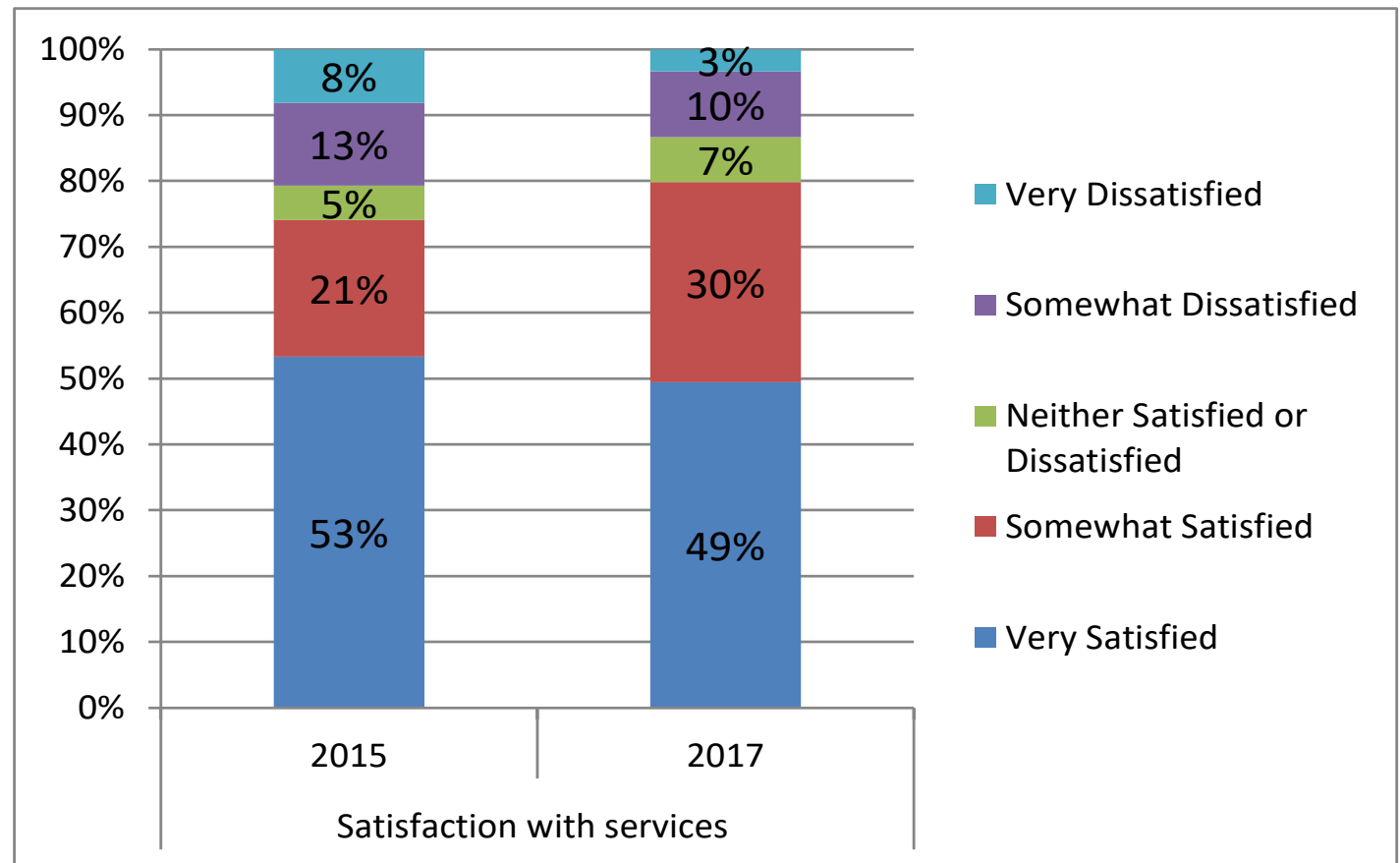
Looking at the trend over several years’ time, fewer people feel less satisfied with an increasing number feeling about the same year to year.



# Preliminary Findings – Service Satisfaction

“How satisfied are you with the special education services your child is receiving (school year 2016-2017)?”

Question: Given the 2015 survey findings, are Extended School Year services still an outlier to special education service satisfaction?



# What is Extended School Year (ESY)?

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"An extended year program may be identified if the student **has demonstrated or is likely to demonstrate** substantial regression in his or her learning skills and/or difficulty in relearning such skills if an extended program is not provided" [603 CMR 28.05(4)(d)1].

ESY is different than summer school and encompasses individualized programming designed to prevent substantial regression or issues with recoupment (> 6 weeks following a break) toward IEP goals and benchmarks.

## Why are we asking about ESY?

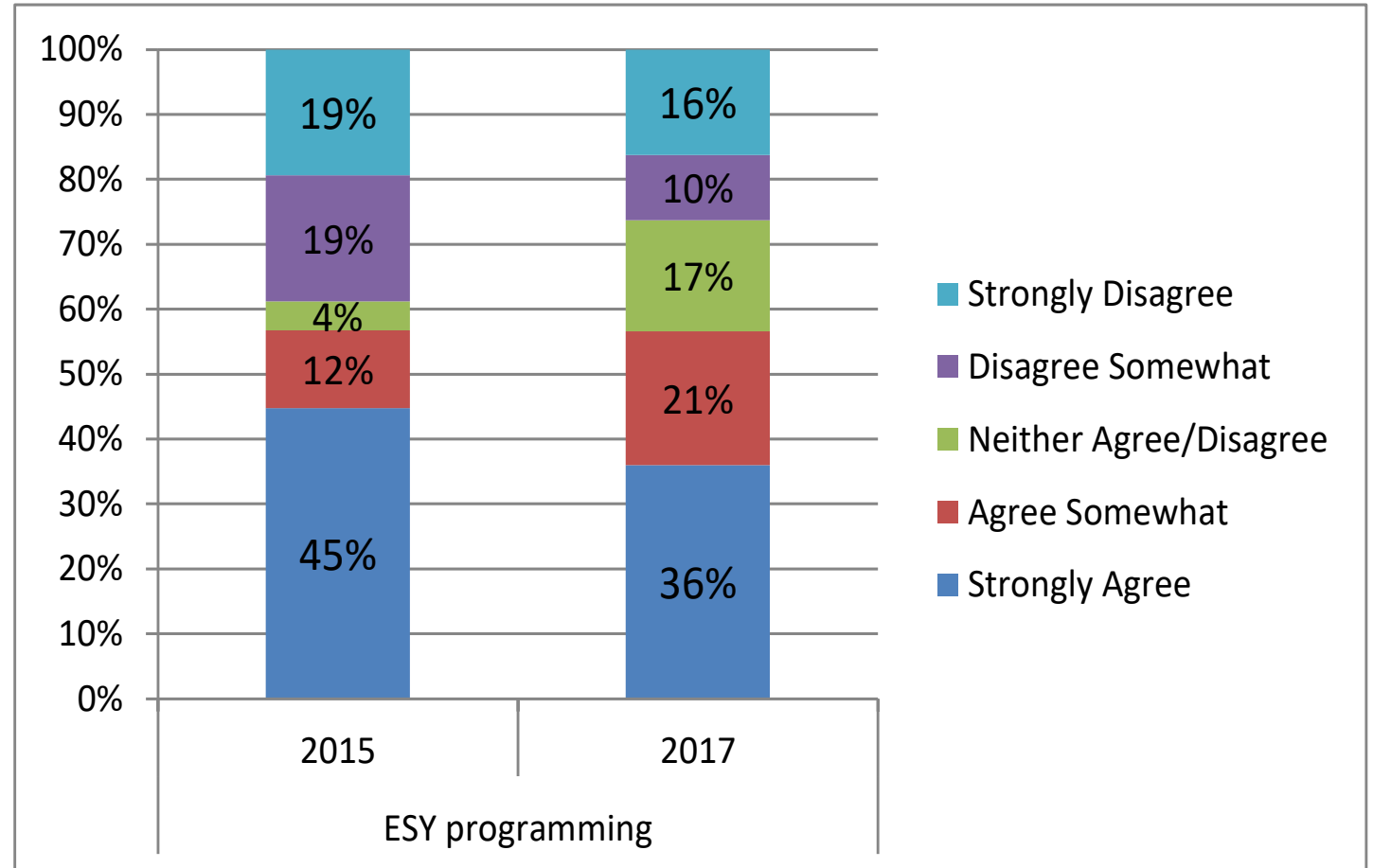
- 2015 finding that ~40% of respondents disagreed their children were being offered appropriate summer programming if they were at risk of regression
- Reports parents were told students had to demonstrate regression to qualify for ESY
- Parent requests for logistical information earlier in the year to assist with planning—Student Services made program dates, days, and times available in February

# Preliminary Findings – ESY

“If my child is at risk of regression over the summer due to his/her disability, my child was offered appropriate extended year programming.”

Moved from ~40% disagreement to 26% disagreement as more parents reported neutral opinions

1 in 4 still disagrees



# Extended School Year Changes 2016-'17

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	<b>2015-2016</b>	<b>2016-2017</b>
SwD on October 1	968	933
ESY Qualified*	296	260
% Qualified	31%	28%

- Preschool summer program reduced by one hour per week
- Junior high & senior high school summer programming reduced to three days per week from four, including Occupational Development Program
- Elementary hours static; ABA programming increased by one hour per week
- Parents expressing concerns about staffing changes from regular school year to summer, timeliness of communication

\*ESY stats provided by Student Services 6/16/17

# Key Takeaways & Next Steps

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- Honest, frequent, positive communication correlates with service and overall satisfaction based on data and open-ended comments (see full report for more information)
- More parents feel comfortable disagreeing with their child's special education team without fear of consequences—14% still fear reprisal
- Through multiple changes to special education administration and department structure, most parents are satisfied
- Extended School Year services remain an outlier to overall service satisfaction

## **The PAC needs to:**

- Work with Student Services to ensure transparency around proposed program changes
- Continue parent education efforts around ESY
- Conduct more frequent mini surveys on specific topics rather than a periodic long-form survey

# Acknowledgments

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We recognize Nancy Sherburne  
for over a decade of service to the families of Acton & Boxborough  
and for her continued support.

Thanks to Special Education Director Pamela Smith  
& Assistant Superintendent of Student Services Dawn Bentley  
for their consideration and partnership this year.

Thank you to the ABRSC for your time.

**[www.abspedpac.org](http://www.abspedpac.org)**