



Special Services Department

Experience Survey Results & Action Plan

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Survey Questions

- How would you rate the CST process (i.e. referral, evaluation, and IEP development)?
- Do you feel satisfied that all of your questions and concerns have been addressed at you child's most recent IEP meeting?
- How would you rate the sense of inclusion (with respect to climate and culture) in SOMSD?
- How would you rate the District's services in regard to Speech, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Counseling, and Behavioral Intervention Support?
- How would you rate the academic progress of your child?
- How would you rate the social-emotional progress of your child (i.e. peer relations, displaying appropriate behavior etc.)?
- If your child requires support from a paraprofessional, do you have a clear understanding of the reason and goals for this support as well as the plan for fostering independence?
- Outside of report cards and IEP Progress Reports, do you receive information related to your child's progress from their teacher?
- Do you feel there is a need for an Executive Functioning class or program at the middle schools and CHS?

Survey Outreach & Response

The survey was shared through a PowerSchool correspondence to all special education parents and also shared by SEPAC to all of their members.

We had a total of 91 respondents

- Preschool ~ 5
- Elementary School ~ 46
- Middle School ~ 15
- High School ~ 20
- Transition Program ~ 1
- Out-of-District Placement ~ 4

58% “Satisfied” or “Highly Satisfied” with the CST process

- **Positives Identified:**

- Case managers were frequently cited as a major strength, described as amazing, excellent, fantastic, responsive, communicative, knowledgeable, professional, and dedicated.
- The kindness, caring, and knowledge of special education teachers, classroom teachers, clinicians, and evaluators were highlighted, often noting their dedication to the students' best interests and progress.
- Many noted the program's positive impact, with their children making significant progress, now "miles ahead," and receiving the necessary support for success.

- **Areas of Concern:**

- While some thought communication was a strength, others cited a lack of follow-up, and responsiveness from staff and they felt that regular feedback on their child's progress is lacking.
- The CST process is consistently slow, lengthy, and information on initiating the referral process is difficult to find.
- High turnover and/or staff vacancies

66% felt satisfied that questions and concerns were addressed at the most recent IEP meeting

Areas of Concern:

- Specific concerns involve accommodations not followed by all teachers, improper modifications on assessments particularly in inclusion classes.
- Issues include lack of teacher attendance at IEP meetings, meetings being rushed, and a lack of clarity on available supports.
- Parents worry that overloaded case managers cannot truly know the students, and that this could lead to children "falling through the cracks."
- Several responses highlight the perceived failure to recognize a child's unique profile, including not challenging students to their potential or offering appropriate program options too late.

62% “Satisfied” or “Highly Satisfied” with the sense of inclusion with respect to climate & culture

- **Positives Identified:**

- Inclusion Classrooms/Co-Teaching Model provide a seamless, supportive environment for all students.
- Students largely feel accepted, integrated, and unstigmatized by their IEPs, reflecting a strong community and acceptance among peers and staff.
- Teachers and support staff are highly commended for their deep care, inclusive mindsets, and expertise.

- **Areas of Concern:**

- Many advocated for continued & expanded inclusion services and classrooms. Suggestions include increased classroom staff support, better PD on neurodivergent behaviors, reduced inclusion class sizes, and ensuring all staff are versed in working with special education students.
- Special education needs to be integrated into the curriculum, including books by/about people with disabilities. There is a call for better messaging to the wider school community and alternative preschool curriculum models to support neurodivergent children's needs, particularly for transitions.

62% “Satisfied” or “Highly Satisfied” with the provision of related services

- **Positives Identified:**

- Therapists, social workers, teachers, and specialists were highly praised as excellent, skillful, caring, and professional.
- Students have positive relationships with providers, willingly attend sessions, and benefit from learned strategies.
- Services are generally available and provided consistently, including support for absences and high-level classes.
- Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and speech services were noted as highly successful.

- **Areas of Concern:**

- Major concerns include lack of communication outside of yearly IEP meetings, inconsistent service delivery (especially for social skills and speech), and high therapist turnover.
- Some felt counseling and behavioral intervention were in need of improvement.

66% *“Satisfied” or “Highly Satisfied” with their child’s academic progress*

- **Positives Identified:**

- Many students showed significant academic growth with some reaching grade level, and improving stamina.
- Educators were praised for dedication, communication, and nurturing students' love for subjects like math. General support staff and caring teachers were also noted as strengths.
- Students are growing in self-advocacy, recognizing abilities, becoming more independent in work, and showing greater confidence and positive emotional availability for learning.

- **Areas of Concern:**

- Concerns were noted about perceived decreased support as students enter the high school.
- The consistent application of IEP accommodations and modifications (especially in math), and specific support for executive dysfunction and transitions.
- Several responses noted mixed messaging about their child's progress, and a desire for more regular updates and feedback.

61% “Satisfied” or “Highly Satisfied” with their child’s social-emotional progress

- **Positives Identified:**

- Many children have made more friends, enjoy peer interaction, and feel included, with some parents noting their child is very social or has a supportive friend group.
- Several children exhibit stronger confidence, reduced anxiety, increased maturity, and are better at communicating their needs, self-advocacy, and demonstrating polite conduct.
- Children have developed greater resilience, improved frustration tolerance, and are better at recognizing limits and regulating emotions in a calm environment.

- **Areas of Concern:**

- Significant struggles were reported in the transition to high school resulting in school refusal.
- Parents expressed concern that some classroom environments may be too rigid and are detrimental to their child's emotional well-being, leading to ostracization, or school avoidance.
- There is a perceived lack of awareness among many staff regarding the needs of students with disabilities, how these disabilities manifest emotionally, and appropriate ways to respond and support them, including cultural competence.

70% expressed a clear understanding of the reason and goals for paraprofessional support as well as the plan for fostering independence

- Parents lack clarity on para assignment, goals, specific support strategies, and daily duties. Some were unaware of para changes.
- Issues include inconsistent presence, inability to help, inadequate training, and the possibility that a 1:1 paraprofessional compensated for a subpar classroom.
- Parents desire meetings with paras for feedback, tips, and understanding coverage when the para is absent.
- Requests for clear support plans, goals, progress reports, and a mechanism to request a para change.

58% felt that they receive information related to their child's progress from their teacher outside of progress reports

82% feel there is a need for an Executive Functioning class or program at the middle schools and CHS

Action Items

- **Communication**

- Responses indicated a desire for increased communication at all levels
- Use of PowerSchool Messenger for communication & announcements
- Better enforcement of the 48 (business) hour response time noted in our BOE Policy at all levels
- On time progress reports and more thorough QA/QC before release to parents.
- July 2026 Implementation of P.L. 2025, c.107 [DOE Guidance of Additional Annual IEP Meeting Notice Requirements](#)

- **Professional Development**

- Responses indicated a need for a greater degree of understanding in meeting the needs of students with disabilities outside of their special education classes/programs
- Enhanced collaboration with C&I to ensure professional development opportunities are geared toward providing an inclusive environment for all students
- We have begun the Ed Camp model this year, which gives our staff the opportunity to shine by delivering professional develop to their colleagues in their area of expertise.
- Sessions have largely focused on how to best implement the co-teaching model, how to navigate Frontline, best practices in writing goals & objectives, how to manage difficult behaviors and how best to work with classified students in special area classes.

Action Items

- **Behavior Intervention & Support**

- Responses voiced concern regarding classroom management, response to misbehavior, and consequences that are more punitive and less restorative
- Last Spring our MTSS teams were trained in the Collaborative Proactive Solutions (CPS) model of behavior management to be used as part of the I&RS process.
- District initiative collaborating with the organization Lives in the Balance and the methodologies of Dr. Ross Greene
- Looks at all student misbehavior as an unsolved problem and engages learners in solutions
- Our District Administrative Team meetings through December are dedicated to a book study of *Lost in School* written by Dr. Greene.
- As an extension of the initial training, coaching from our CPS trainer, Kim Hopkins, is being provided to the MTSS teams as they implement the model in real time this school year.
- The next step in the training is to more formally train teachers in the CPS model and provide on-site coaching in their classrooms.
- This is a monumental shift in thinking and will be a multi-year initiative

Action Items

- **Teacher & related service vacancies**

- Responses showed a concern over the number of teacher and related services provider vacancies and the impact it has on their children
- We continue to post immediately for all vacancies as soon as we are aware of the need.
- Expanding our relationships with local universities and colleges to offer internship opportunities as this is a pipeline of new staff
- Expanding our contracts with outside agencies when tenure track candidates are not found
- Reaching out to agencies quicker to secure candidates when necessary

- **Executive Functioning**

- Overwhelming response that a need exists for a class or program dedicated to executive functioning skills at the middle and high school level.
- Research shows executive functioning skills should not be taught in a vacuum for student success.
- Looking to form a partnership with Cannon Educational Consulting to provide our staff with professional development and coaching to infuse these strategies into every class with consistency.

Action Items

- **Paraprofessionals**

- While the overwhelming majority understood the reasons for the assignment of a paraprofessional, there were some parents who were still unclear.
- The CST have been directed to continue to review the paraprofessional criteria and fading forms with teachers and parents at least twice a year.
- Teachers are charged with developing goals and objectives surrounding the assignment of paraprofessionals, collecting data, and reporting through progress reports.
- We are proud of work we have done to ensure the appropriate level of support while also fostering independence in our students.

- **Evidenced Based Reading (EBR) Instruction & Program**

- While not specifically addressed in this survey, we are taking a close look at the EBR program this year.
- Our goal this year is to better define the criteria by which students gain entrance and are “graduated” from the program.
- We are collaborating with the EBR teachers monthly to decide upon the instruments and resources used so that we can be more consistent across the district.
- A multi-sensory approach to teaching literacy needs to be expanded beyond the EBR Program in order to reach Pull-Out Resource (POR), and In Class Resource Support (ICRS).
- This is another multi-year initiative, but we are starting with a survey of all POR & ICRS teachers to gain an understanding of their current level of expertise and training.

Thank you for your support!