

To: Board of Education
From: Dr. Laurie Heinz, Superintendent
Mike Padavic, Interim Director of Student Services
Date: May 21, 2018
Re: Interim Director Findings and Recommendations for Special Education 2018-19

Mr. Mike Padavic was hired as the Interim Director of Student Services in mid-December 2017, and began his 100-day “expert-in-residence” work. As a veteran administrator, Mr. Padavic was able to immediately identify areas of strength, while also recognizing opportunities for improvement -- both short- and long-term -- and to initiate changes immediately wherever possible.

With the rapidly approaching end to the school year, Mr. Padavic will be completing his assignment with District 64. This report was crafted to capture his key takeaways, recommendations and priority areas of focus for the 2018-19 school year when Dr. Lea Anne Frost takes over the student services helm. The May 21, 2018 meeting is anticipated to be his final opportunity to speak with the Board and share these significant and unique insights from what has been in effect, a 100-day in-depth review/audit of this department.

Also at this meeting, Lisa Harrod of LMT Consulting will review with the Board the Executive Summary (Attachment 1) of her review/audit of the operations of the Student Services department, which was conducted in March-April 2018 with the goal of identifying areas of strength as well as opportunities for improvement going forward. It should be noted that the LMT report is based on information gathered from those who participated in this particular audit, and is not meant to represent the ideas and thoughts of all stakeholders.

We believe that Mr. Padavic’s observations and recommendations from his 100-day assignment with District 64, along with additional perspectives from the LMT team, will be extremely useful to Dr. Frost and administration in prioritizing steps for improvement as the 2018-19 school year gets underway. Finally, Dr. Frost will also make her own assessment throughout the course of her first year to determine a roadmap for the longer term improvement of the department, which is focused on improving student outcomes.

Overall Observations from Mr. Padavic

As Mr. Padavic prepares to wrap up his work with District 64, he offers these overarching observations about the District’s special education program:

- Now ending its third year, the District 64 *2020 Vision* Strategic Plan engages all staff and works to continuously improve offerings for students. One of the goals of the plan was to

ensure that the District works to become a *school system, not a system of schools* as identified through the Consortium for Educational Change (CEC) study in 2015. Much of the work reported by administrators and staff has been focused on the overarching achievement of this goal. The Student Services department is continuing to work toward this goal of creating consistency among all the schools, so that curriculum and educational experiences for students are the same at each building. Dr. Frost will further this work as she begins her tenure in District 64.

- Special education staff members do a great job helping students with significant needs grow to become more independent. Every building can talk about specific students who have shown growth far surpassing the goals that staff initially had for them. Staff members are committed and have helped students achieve to reach their potential. Staff have worked very hard to make sure that students are improving.
- The vast majority of staff members have adopted a growth mindset, which is the foundation of the continuous improvement envisioned in the District's Strategic Plan. These staff members are personally committed to learning and evolving as professional educators and want to do so in partnership with building and district leaders.
- Resources are abundant in District 64, both for staff and students. Staff have ample learning resources, technology, classroom materials, colleagues and peers available to assist them in differentiating instruction successfully. All of these resources together help improve student growth.

STAFFING

Staff Rapport, Meetings and Team-Building

- **Observations from Mr. Padavic**

Mr. Padavic reports that he found a department that had undergone both rapid and second-order change. This was brought about through an intensified effort, led by the previous director, to move the District forward in terms of student achievement of students with identified special needs, compliance, and growth as special educators. Students who had previously spent more time in instructional classrooms are now spending more of their day in the inclusionary setting of general education. More students are now in co-taught classes, which contributed to this important shift in moving students into the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) as required by law. These changes were necessary, valid and supported by the data compiled in state reports (Educational Environment codes). However, Mr. Padavic observed that *how these changes were implemented in a short period of time by the previous director* has contributed to a lack of “buy-in” from some staff members in this needed shift.

During his first weeks, Mr. Padavic joined Dr. Heinz in staff lounge visits to each school as a “listening and learning tour” to hear first-hand the concerns of staff members, both regular

education and those in student services. Along with department meetings at the staff level, he determined that some relationships had eroded during the past several years under the leadership of the previous director during this time of considerable change. In addition, Mr. Padavic also observed that special education coordinators and the assistant department director were not perceived as being visible and accessible; he reported that the coordinator allocation for the elementary schools was not being provided in the same ratio as the middle school allocation. The District has already been able to address this imbalance, with the Board's recent authorization to hire an additional elementary coordinator for 2018-19. This should help these administrators to be more visible and accessible to staff.

Rebuilding and/or strengthening communication within buildings and across the District has been an immediate focus of Mr. Padavic's activities with District 64 over these several months. Among the steps that have been taken and his recommendations going forward are:

- **Monthly Staff Meetings** - Regular department meetings were not being held. Mr. Padavic initiated monthly staff meetings with the entire special education department, including all related services staff (speech language, OT/PT, social workers, psychologists), special education teachers and the early childhood teachers.
Recommendation: Continue this practice, so that there is a consistent voice and communication from the department director, and that all staff hear the same message and have an opportunity to raise questions and concerns in real time. Such meetings will also encourage timely two-way communication between teachers and district administration.
- **Weekly Special Education Building Meetings** - Although it is impossible for the director to attend every weekly meeting at each of our eight schools, Mr. Padavic implemented a schedule to attend meetings at least once a month in each building. This allowed him to again hear and learn first-hand what is happening in the building and learn what the building needs are related to students or services. **Recommendation:** This practice should be continued, as it helped build rapport between the building staff and the District office, and quickly identified both common and unique points of action for resources or staffing.
- **Related Service Staff Meeting** - Mr. Padavic initiated regular separate meetings with each of these specialist groups independently to talk about specific concerns related to their particular areas of expertise. These specialists include speech language, OT/PT, social workers, and psychologists. **Recommendation:** This practice should be continued once every trimester.

Although these commitments do require time, the meetings themselves need not be lengthy. In addition, having a regular schedule to build collegial relationships, address issues, keep lines of communication open, share information, and celebrate successes builds collaboration and cooperation through the department as a whole. Moving forward, will be of critical importance.

Other outreach recommendations include:

- **Weekly staff updates** - Although Mr. Padavic did not have time to initiate this for D64, he believes from past experience that weekly updates from the director to the entire department are an important communication as well as a team-building tool.
Recommendation: The new director should start this practice for the 2018-19 school year. The updates need not be extensive; it is the regularity and critical content that is essential.
- **Visibility and accessibility** - Mr. Padavic began each morning at one of the schools to spend time with staff in person. **Recommendation:** The new director should incorporate this practice in her schedule.

Professional Development

- **Observations from Mr. Padavic**

In his initial meetings with staff at each meeting, Mr. Padavic learned through staff feedback that professional development was an area of concern. His additional research through conversations with principals and special education coordinators, and his reviews of past training offerings, indicated gaps relative to the expectations now being placed on staff with the adoption of co-teaching and the shift of more students into general education classrooms. In addition, Mr. Padavic noted that more training would also be needed for related service staff (social workers, psychologists, speech pathologists, OT/PT, nurses) as students with more complex and significant needs enter our population in expanding numbers.

Based on his work with D64 staff over the past months, Mr. Padavic has identified that professional growth offerings in these areas should be targeted:

- Ongoing co-teaching training beyond initial launch sessions to provide clear delineations of staff roles, and ensure, whenever possible, plan time is available to co-teaching partners
- IEP/goal writing and formal facilitated IEP training
- Mentoring of new staff (teachers, social workers, teacher assistants, speech pathologist, OT) -- initial “need to know” and ongoing training linked to job responsibilities
- Social emotional learning, including restorative justice/practices
- Diversity/disability awareness training for all staff, given the expanded co-teaching model

Recommendation: Conduct professional growth workshops on co-teaching (both introductory and advanced) and restorative justice practice, scheduled for this summer. This fall, launch training for staff on how to conduct facilitate IEP meetings. Explore additional professional development for staff in IEP goal-writing, working with students who have difficulty attending school (i.e., school refusal), working with students with complex health issues, and other priority

areas. In addition, per IDEA, the District every spring will provide a professional needs assessment to staff throughout the district and provide offerings to best meet their professional growth needs and to support District initiatives.

PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Parent/Guardian Outreach

- **Observations from Mr. Padavic**

Mr. Padavic immediately observed that at Board of Education meetings (both before and immediately after his arrival), some parents expressed concerns that there was a lack of collaboration and communication between the school and parents, and that some parents therefore felt disconnected from the decision-making process about their child. To reestablish these connections, Mr. Padavic immediately met with many parents at individual meetings in December and January to hear and address the specific concerns of those parents.

In addition to this important work, Dr. Heinz and Mr. Padavic also immediately launched a new parent engagement program to reach all special education parents/guardians across District 64, including parents of students with IEPs as well as 504 plans. Here are the steps taken:

- **New - Special Education Parent Group** - A new group (with a [companion webpage](#)) was created for parents of special needs students to help build collaborative relationships between parents and District staff, promote awareness, and provide opportunities for education, support and acceptance of students with disabilities in our D64 learning community. The group met four times this winter and spring. One meeting featured an informative presentation on special education spending in District 64 from Chief School Business Official Luann Kolstad based on parent request to learn more about Maintenance of Effort (MOE) and the District's investments in this area. (Attachment 2) Noted behavior expert Alice Belgrade also was invited to conduct a workshop called: *"Teach, Don't Punish" - Behavior Change in Children with Learning Differences*. This was very well received by parents as well, and her materials have been added as an ongoing resource to the D64 website.. **Recommendation**: Conduct quarterly meetings of this group on topics of mutual concern and interest to parents, staff and the District.
- **New - Parents and Teachers Talking Together (PT3)** - This group brought together a group of staff members and parents in a unique, facilitated workshop format. The group was convened in March and again in May, and has focused on developing five areas: training for staff, parent education, curriculum, students, and District. As a result, PT3 is now moving into sub-groups to work on these five areas as well as on the development of a mission statement. **Recommendation**: Continue the PT3 subgroups. Identify and conduct parent education workshops in the areas identified by parents.

- **New - Survey for Parents** - In conjunction with the special education audit conducted by LMT Consulting, District 64 invited parents of all students receiving special education services to complete an online survey to share their perceptions on areas of strength and opportunities for improvement in District 64's special education program. The survey questions were developed by the Parent-Educator Partnership group of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to help districts gather feedback from parents. Results of this survey are included as Attachment 3. **Recommendation**: Based on the survey results, District 64 and the director should continue the steps already underway and consider adding additional parent outreach on selected areas as a priority over the next year. Additionally, the ISBE survey should be sent out annually to allow parents to share their voice surrounding their special education experience.

Additional Parent Outreach

- **Observations from Mr. Padavic**

Parents play a critical role within the IEP process. As such, relationships need to be cultivated to ensure two-way communication and partnerships are established. **Recommendations**: Specific communication tools can be expanded or created to provide more information to special education parents on an ongoing basis. These opportunities include:

- **District 64 Special Education PTO** - With inclusion being the goal, another opportunity to build awareness and understanding is through the addition of a more formal PTO structure. **Recommendation**: Investigate the desire to start a building-based special education PTO that works in conjunction with each school's existing PTO/A.
- **Special Education Parent Handbook** - This handbook would be a resource especially for families of special needs students to provide information about the structure of the department, definition of acronyms used in special education, etc. **Recommendation**: Draft a D64 handbook using models from other school districts as a basis and work with the Parent Group to bring forward further ideas.
- **Expanded D64 website materials** - The Student Services area is currently underutilized, and could be the homebase for other materials that parents/guardians would find helpful on an ongoing basis, such as materials on demystifying the IEP process for parents/guardians and the ABC's of Special Education, for example. **Recommendation**: Add new materials and work with the Parent Group to bring forward further helpful items to be included.

DEPARTMENT/CURRICULUM

Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS) and Intervention Offerings

- **Observations from Mr. Padavic**

Over recent years, schools across the country have moved from the Response to Intervention (RtI) model to a MTSS. This work is continuing in D64 and needs to be monitored to ensure that consistent methodologies, materials and entrance/exit criteria are used across all eight schools.

Recommendation: Continue to review the roll out of tiered intervention offerings to ensure fidelity of implementation of the process and paperwork. Additionally, monitor the year two expansion of social emotional and behavioral supports across all three tiers.

Continuum of Services (COS)

- **Observations from Mr. Padavic**

Mr. Padavic observed that opportunities exist within the continuum of services offered in District 64, that will be further evaluated by reviewing current practices against best practices in this area. **Recommendation:** Create a team to review the continuum of services currently available and discuss opportunities to change or maintain the existing Continuum of Service offerings.

Behavior Intervention Plans/Functional Behavior Assessments and Outside Consultants

- **Observations from Mr. Padavic**

Mr. Padavic has reviewed the District's practices related to BIP and FBAs, and notes the number of students that would benefit from these additional behavioral supports has steadily increased. To support their needs, we contract with outside behavioral experts at a cost to the District.

Recommendation: Mr. Padavic recommends that the District explores hiring a behavior interventionist to provide additional and more timely support to staff and students in behavioral crisis as well as to build the capacity of special education/crisis teams to intervene as needed.

Standardization of Practices

- **Disability Awareness Outreach - Observations from Mr. Padavic**

As mentioned at the outset, District 64 through the Strategic Plan process is engaged ensuring that the District operates as a school system, rather than a system of schools. Mr. Padavic reported that many activities are underway at individual schools, but there is a lack of consistency across the District in some areas. **Recommendation:** Review activities in key areas to ensure that successful activities and practices are shared and coordinated among all schools.

- **Inclusionary Practices - Best Buddies (at Emerson) and Special Olympics (at Emerson, Lincoln and Field) are already in place and running very successfully at several schools.**

Recommendation: Opportunities should be expanded to the other buildings. These programs help to develop a mindset of inclusion for students, staff, parents and the community.

- **IEP Process - Mr. Padavic attended numerous IEP meetings over many months, and was able to observe how the process was conducted. Recommendation: Training should be ongoing to make sure all IEP meetings are run consistently through the District. Consider that the District train staff on the use of facilitated IEP.**

- **Teacher Assistant Allocations and Training Needs** - Teacher Assistant training does occur during the school year, however, it should be done more often and have consistent training for all the assistants. **Recommendation:** Use a consistent program specifically geared to teacher aide training. The creation of a TA Handbook would also help to standardize expectations and training.
- **Staff Materials and Resources** - The Instructional classrooms across the District serve a wide range of students. The District has abundant resources for staff and students. **Recommendation:** These materials and resources will be reviewed and refreshed to ensure that D64 is staying current with best practices.

District Investment in Special Education

- **Observations from Mr. Padavic**

The District continues to provide services to 670 students and will continue this high level of support to our students. Funding is currently available to meet student needs.

Recommendation: Consider for 2018-19 adding new staff positions, including a social worker to share caseloads at the larger elementary buildings; K-8 behavior interventionist; and a Dean to help support current building leadership with growing enrollment at Emerson Middle School.

Next Steps

Mr. Padavic will end his assignment with District 64 shortly after school closes in June. He is committed to meeting with Dr. Frost for transition planning, and will be thoroughly reviewing these findings and recommendations with her. This summer, Dr. Frost will be meeting with administrators and Dr. Heinz to prioritize the action steps needed to move forward.

We believe the insights from Mr. Padavic's in-depth "audit," along with the perspectives from LMT Consulting, offer District 64 and Dr. Frost an opportunity to re-boot and re-focus on the improvement areas identified above with staff and parents/guardians, which are fundamental to increasing the growth of every child.

Board members are encouraged to contact Mr. Padavic with questions in advance of the May 21 meeting, so that he can be prepared to respond. As a reminder, this will be his final meeting with the Board of Education.

To: Park Ridge-Niles District 64 Board of Education

Dr. Laurie Heinz

Mr. Mike Padavic

From: Lisa M. Harrod

Re: Executive Summary of The Special Education Comprehensive Review/Audit

Date: May 21, 2018

The Park Ridge-Niles School District Special Education Department has been in a transition. Mr. Mike Padavic has been serving as the Interim Director of Special Education. The District has moved forward with a comprehensive review/audit of the department. This review includes several components that will be introduced on the following page.

The district has engaged in the review/audit process to gain a comprehensive view of the department as a whole, communication across various channels, a review of the continuum of services offered, goal-writing, and special education policies and procedures.

The District 64 administration has stated that they will use the review/audit findings to assist the new Director of Special Education in ensuring all students have access to high-quality programming and as a roadmap to prioritize any areas of reform that are needed. The review/audit will present recommendations useful in helping the new director to open up communication and serve as a resource to stakeholders.

The following report is to be viewed as a summary of information based on data collected from multiple outlets, interviews with parents, community members, staff members, district administration, and surveys conducted by District 64. It is not meant to represent the ideas or thoughts of all stakeholders.

Proposed Scope of Comprehensive Review/Audit

The following is the proposed scope of the audit and an overview of some of the data reviewed:

- A review of existing student data and a thorough review of relevant district data
- Facilitation of a structured parent meeting and report on conclusions
- Review of a District facilitated parent survey and educator survey
- Review of surveys conducted on curriculum, programs, climate and culture
- Two or more on-site interviews of selected staff members at the building level
- On-going email communication, interviews, data collection, and updates between auditor and administrative team members
- Review of the pre-referral process and steps leading to special education entitlement
- Review of the Response to Intervention process
- Discussion about the utilization of support staff in classrooms and programs
- Discussion about the continuum of services offered for students and how those decisions are made
- Evaluation of professional development needs and future offerings, as well as trainings staff has already engaged in.
- Exploration of perceptions of special education services as a whole
- Review of the role of teacher assistants/instructional assistants in classrooms and programs
- Review of instructional alignment with interventions and classroom core curriculum
- Review of effective behavior management, modification, and programming strategies and validity/fidelity of implementation
- Observations of Special Education Classrooms
- Discussion of creating a vision, mission, and slogan for the department aligned to the existing vision and mission statement for District 64
- Review of any district awards, recognitions, and other celebrations
- Review of files to ensure goals and objectives are measurable
- Review of the district co-teaching design and discussion of suggested improvements for sustainability.

Comprehensive Review/Audit Process:

The lead auditor reviewed over 54 District 64 Documents before the on-site parent interview night. Additional documents were reviewed over the course of the review/audit. This included viewing previous board meetings, reviewing survey data, professional development plans, and conducting file reviews.

Structured parent interviews were conducted on Wednesday, April 11th

On-Site interviews were conducted by a team of 5 auditors on Thursday, April 12th and Monday, April 16th.

The schedule was created by district administrators. The schedule flowed very well and the auditing team is grateful for the cooperative spirit exhibited by the district school staff.

The following represents the number of stakeholders interviewed by the auditing team:

75 Parents were interviewed as part of the parent forum night, appointments at the school site or phone interviews.

149 Educators and Support Staff Members were interviewed over a two-day period in their respective schools.

25 School District 64 Administrators were interviewed at the school site or district office.

1 District 64 Board of Education Member was interviewed.

The review/auditing team has agreed to engage in further conversations regarding implementation of suggested activities and high-quality professional development over the course of the next school year.

Although the timeline for the review/audit required a quicker turnover rate than previous audits conducted, the team feels that the executive summary report contains information valuable to moving the district programs forward and renewing a collaborative partnership between district administration, staff members, and parents.

There were consistent themes generated throughout a review of the data, interviews and conversations held with stakeholders.

The review/auditing team feels that the following words represent a model district commitment to successful movement of the department forward in the future.

Positive Relationships

Open Communication

Higher Expectations

Shared Ownership = A Renewed Trust

Through these actions, stakeholders should see movement in a manner in which the department is unified, rather than schools acting independently. Direction will be needed by the new leader of the Special Education Department to ensure the system is moving forward ...together.

The Following are Strengths and Celebrations:

The district's greatest asset is its staff members and children. It is evident that the staff members and administration at the school sites care about the student's they serve. They want what is best for them, and as the auditors were walking through the hallways and visiting classrooms, the students were addressed by their name and often asked how their day was going. The students responded favorably. These positive relationships will assist in reform efforts.

Students were engaged in the learning environment in classrooms observed. Many small group and large group activities were occurring.

Internal teams at the school sites are strong and communicated to the auditors that they want to see the department return to the family feel that it once enjoyed.

The hiring of Mr. Padavic has helped to open up communication and focus on the issues that have been reported over the last several months. He was seen throughout the interview process as a positive force in assisting in opening up communication across the department.

PBIS has been implemented and is continuing to expand. This will aide in providing the ability for students to understand behavioral expectations.

The Second Step program has been implemented and staff members hope that it can be expanded on.

Staff are flexible in adapting to multiple changes and are eager to learn new strategies for meeting the needs of all students.

The new IEP system grants access to educators and therapists and serves as a way to share information.

Parents have a high attendance rate in meetings for students and are genuinely concerned with being an active participant in making decisions in collaboration with the team.

Teachers do their best to advocate for students under challenging conditions and are hopeful and positive about potential reform efforts and opening up the programming options for students.

Class sizes are manageable and in line with state averages.

Staff members are using available resources to create access to curriculum for students and are looking forward to a format for writing goals that are measurable and based on individual student needs.

In summary, District 64 has valuable and knowledgeable staff members that are dedicated and want what is best for the students they serve. Building administrators and staff members look forward to the future with a system that is connected with open communication and relationships build on trust.

The Following are Current Reported Challenges and Advanced Opportunities for Improvement, Discussion, and Reflection:

Lack of trust in district administration was a consistent theme discussed by staff and parent groups involved in the review process.

The building level special education teams are not connected with the district special education department. There needs to be a connectedness and clear process and procedure for department initiatives, programming, understanding of available resources, and expectations.

Decisions for student placement should not be based on percentiles or cut-off scores on assessments but rather individual student strengths and challenges with data and evidence to support programming that will allow for maximum growth opportunities.

There is an adversarial environment reported with many staff members hesitant to provide feedback and ideas for students in special education meetings. These staff members are working with the students and have valuable feedback to offer.

The culture and climate in the special education department has changed drastically over the last two years. Staff would like to see the collegial atmosphere return across the district.

Programming options and the continuum of services have declined over the past two years. This has created many questions from parents and staff members about consistency in programming and services. Decisions should be made by the team, in the best interest of students, and communicated appropriately and adequately.

Decisions about placing students in more restrictive environments and decreasing or increasing minutes must occur as part of a formal special education Individualized Education Plan meeting and not in informal meetings or phone calls with parents. There are several cases on record where this has occurred and this is a priority area of immediate change.

Team members have not been invited to all meetings where student placement decisions occurred.

Expectations are needed for the co-taught program and to assist in defining the difference between pull-out programming and true co-taught classrooms.

Programs should be individualized based on student need and ability level. Goals should be written to reflect student outcomes rather than just reported benchmark targets and scores outside of the present levels of academic performance.

IEP's are not consistently written in a clear and comprehensive format. The review team will share more about writing goals that are measurable as part of an extension of the audit.

Teacher assistants should have defined and specific roles with a more limited scope of students in order to build relationships and trust.

Teacher assistants should receive training to better serve students and assist in the successful implementation and monitoring of student behavior management and modification plans.

The building administration and teams should focus on research-based interventions and implementation of appropriate Functional Assessments and Behavior Intervention Plans before the outplacement of students in more restrictive environments outside of the district. Staff reported this as an area of great concern in reviewing the continuum of services currently available. This has occurred with younger students in a manner in which data does not consistently seem to have been reviewed or interventions attempted or adjusted. Decisions should not be made in haste, should be backed by data that is reliable and valid, while reflecting the input of the whole team. This includes the input of those staff members who work directly with the student rather than solely district office coordinators or directors of special education.

504 Accommodation Plans should be reviewed and staff members should be made aware of any modifications afforded to students. Parents should be an integral part of this review process

Staff members and administration feel that the ability of the district to attract and hire high quality candidates is beginning to decline due to current challenges the district is facing and how high profile these challenges have been.

Recommendations and Ideas for Change and Growth:

The coordinator position should be reviewed to provide the ability to better know, understand, and be visible to gain the trust of staff members and lead to better outcomes for student programming in meetings. This will create a more personalized approach and another valuable team member who is familiar with the student when critical decisions are being made.

Strong, systemic professional development opportunities for certified staff should be created focusing on the celebration of diversity, overcoming bias, appropriate programming for the social emotional health and wellness of students, behavioral de-escalation and modification techniques, and understanding the unique needs of students with special needs. A review of co-teaching models and how to use these models to increase the academic achievement of students should also be considered with follow up coaching for teams.

Staff members should engage in high quality professional development on creating goals and objectives that are measurable and based on student strengths and challenges at an individual's ability level rather than objectives based on percentiles and assessment outcomes.

Vertical articulation should occur to allow for a streamlined transition from elementary to middle school and additionally the middle to high school transition.

Staff and Administration should be provided with a detailed, yet easily understood explanation of the Tiers of the MTSS and clarification of Core, Core Plus, and other interventions. Staff and administrators reported difficulty in maneuvering the current system.

A transition process should be created for students who are no longer eligible for special education services to provide support

The district should create and define goals for the co-taught classrooms and how it is different from traditional pull-out services.

The superintendent and district office team should engage in training aimed at increasing knowledge of the intricacies of special education law, the importance of writing goals that are individualized, and should aim to be an integral part of the team as the reform efforts progress and expand. This will allow parents to see partners in their children's education, and a renewed commitment to open communication and change.

A quality mentoring program should be established for all eligible first and second year special education personnel to build relationships and support them as they acclimate to District 64.

Data systems should be created or refined to judge the success of programs from an academic achievement lens and to review the sustainability of programs to create advanced opportunities for all students.

Teams should be formed or strengthened to aid in reviewing initiatives to avoid competition of these initiatives during the reform process in the special education department.

Buildings should use data to determine the feasibility of programs and appropriate allocation of resources.

Shared ownership should begin to occur in placement decisions, and all other aspects of the special education eligibility process.

A specialized team should be formed to engage in moving the department forward by deliberate planning of implementation of audit suggestions and findings

The Director of Special Education should create a newsletter to inform staff of celebrations within the department, highlight diversity and understanding, and offer suggestions and strategies for working with

students across all school environments and working to create greater understanding and acceptance for students. This should assist in creating the family culture that staff felt in the past and feels is currently missing.

Consideration should be given to the creation of a Best Buddies program at the middle school level to promote inclusion and understanding.

Time should be given at all buildings to celebrate diversity of students and work towards the successful inclusion and understanding of students with special needs.

A team should be formed to explore the creation of a high-quality life skills program.

A yearly parent forum, similar to the parent interview night that was held in April, would assist in data collection and open communication based on structured questions.

Parent training opportunities should continue to increase collaboration and a better understanding of special education policies and procedures.

A brochure should be created to assist parents in understanding special education vocabulary and provide an explanation of the continuum of services.

A team of stakeholders should be formed to engage in critical conversations about programming options for students exhibiting behavioral challenges, and how to create sustainable programs to meet the needs of these students both inside and outside of the home school environment.

The list of recommendations is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to be viewed as a starting point for an investment in resources and change to improve the educational performance and appropriateness of student programming. The review/auditing team is willing to engage in more in-depth conversations about change, help prioritize reform effort areas, and serve as a resource moving forward.

Next Steps:

The district should collaboratively review the audit findings and begin to prioritize the areas of recommended change. A review or mini-audit would be useful in assessing the comprehensive reform efforts during the later part of next school year. This would also be the ideal time to begin the Parent Forum process. It is recommended that the district utilize surveys as a way to provide a check and balance system in efforts to increase communication and continued transparency.

In Closing:

The auditing team would like to thank the school sites and district administration for the warm welcome and sharing of information that was useful in completing the audit.

The staff members were outstanding in working with us and genuinely being invested in the review/audit process. Their efforts are greatly appreciated.

We would also like to thank the parents that we had the pleasure of meeting, interviewing, speaking with over the phone, and who felt comfortable sharing their stories as part of the audit. We appreciate your passion and advocacy for your children.

It is our hope now that the audit has been completed that the Board of Education, parents, district administration, and dedicated staff members will come together with a continued growth mindset to move the district forward together in a manner that increases opportunity for students in District 64.

Please let us know if we can be of any assistance.

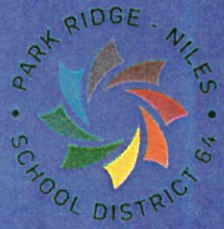
We wish you the very best of everything!

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa M. Harrod

	<p>Park Ridge-Niles District 64</p> <p>Comprehensive Review Summary</p> <p>Developed By: LMT Consulting</p> <p>Lisa M. Harrod, Lead Auditor</p>
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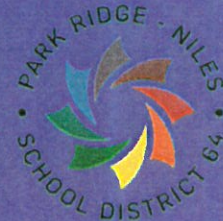
Attachment 2



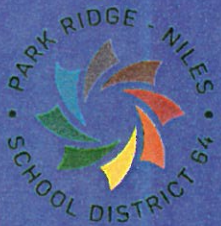
Dr. Laurie Heinz, Superintendent
Mr. Mike Padavic, Interim Director of Student Services
Mrs. Luann Kolstad, Chief School Business Official



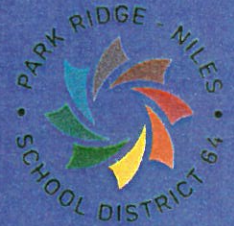
Session 2 Agenda



- Since our Last Meeting
- Special Education Budget Overview
- Budget Q & A
- Next Meeting Date and Area of Focus
- Subgroup Planning



Special Education Updates



→ 4 groups -- next steps

→ Updates:

- ◆ Audit
- ◆ Director
- ◆ PT3 (Parents & Teachers Talking Together)

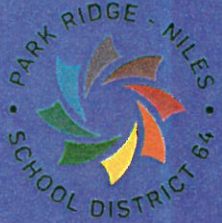


Special Education Funding & Budget Process

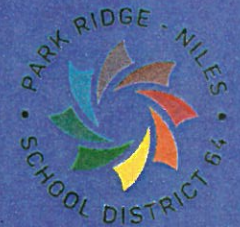


Three streams of funding:

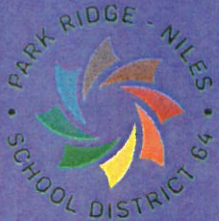
1. Federal
2. State
3. Local



Special Education Funding & Budget Process



- Federal Funding
 - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
 - Two Programs:
 - IDEA Part B - Flow Through
 - IDEA Part B - Preschool
 - Maintenance of Effort (MOE)
 - Medicaid



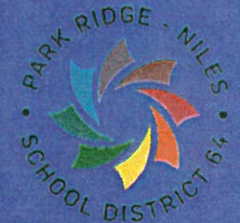
Special Education Funding & Budget Process



- IDEA Part B - Flow Through
 - Salaries of staff who provide services for special education students
 - Teachers, aides, administrative staff, social workers, psychologists, physical therapists
 - Professional development of staff
 - Purchase instructional supplies, materials and equipment



Special Education Funding & Budget Process



- IDEA Part B - Flow Through *Proportionate Share*
 - Must be spent on non-public students within a district's boundaries.
 - Non-public and home-schooled students
 - Individualized Service Plan (ISP)



Special Education Funding & Budget Process



- IDEA Part B - Preschool
 - Salaries of staff to supplement a comprehensive special education program for children with disabilities ages 3-5
 - Materials and supplies



Special Education Funding & Budget Process



Maintenance of Effort (MOE)

Federal Regulation requiring districts to expend AT
LEAST the same year-over-year on educating students with
disabilities based on total year Special Education
expenditures.

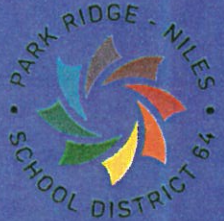


Special Education Funding & Budget Process

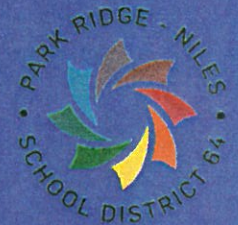


Maintenance of Effort (MOE)

- Two Components to MOE:
 - Eligibility Standard
 - Compliance Standard



Special Education Funding & Budget Process



Maintenance of Effort (MOE)

Allowable exceptions to the District's MOE requirement:

- Voluntary/Involuntary departure of special education or related services personnel
- Decrease in enrollment of children with disabilities
- Termination of a program that is exceptionally costly
- Termination of costly expenditures



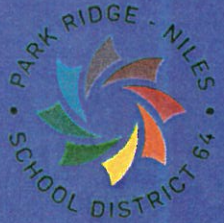
Special Education Funding & Budget Process



Maintenance of Effort (MOE)

Consequences of not meeting MOE:

- District must return an amount equal to the amount by which the District failed to maintain level of expenditures in that fiscal year.
- Or, the amount of the District's IDEA Part B grant in that fiscal year, whichever is lower.



Special Education Funding & Budget Process



Fiscal Year	Special Education Expenditures	Federal Funding	Net Expenditures	Prior Year MOE	MOE Comparison	Per Capita
18: 2015-16	\$13,693,379	\$ 1,022,143	\$12,671,236	\$ 12,413,752	\$ 257,484	\$19,287
17: 2014-15	\$13,434,411	\$ 1,020,659	\$12,413,752	\$ 12,166,049	\$ 247,703	\$18,149
16: 2013-14	\$13,389,801	\$ 1,223,752	\$12,166,049	\$ 12,286,624	\$(120,575)	\$17,944



Special Education Funding & Budget Process



- Medicaid
 - Fee For Service
 - Administrative Outreach



Special Education Funding & Budget Process



- State Funding (Prior to 2017-18)
 - Special Education Personnel
 - Special Education Funding for Children
 - Special Education Summer School
 - Special Education Transportation
- Evidence Based Funding Model (Beginning in 2017-18)
 - Incorporates all of the above ,except Transportation



Special Education Funding & Budget Process



Enhancements District 64 has made to our program:

- 2014-15: added Assistant Director of Student Services
- 2015-16: added two Special Education Coordinators
- 2016-17: added Registered Nurses in ALL schools

What questions do you have?

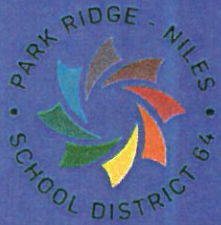


Future Meetings & Topics of Discussion

Wednesdays 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

- **April 11, 2018 -- Topic focus or Speaker**
- **May 2 , 2018 -- Topic focus or Speaker**

Location: Lincoln Middle School (Learning Resource Center)



Save the Date



Who: Parent Night and Institute Day speaker

What: Motivational Public Speaker and Diversity Awareness

When: Thursday, August 16, 2018 at 6:30 p.m.

Where: Lincoln Middle School

Why: Mantra -- *Never Give Up on Kids!*

Special Education Survey Summary of Parent Responses Spring 2018

Parents of students receiving special education or 504 services were invited to participate in an online survey between March 23 and April 23, 2018. The goal of the survey was to gather feedback about areas of strength and opportunities for growth. The 30-question instrument was developed by the Parent-Educator Partnership group of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and was administered anonymously. The survey was emailed to over 800 parents; 124 responses were received.

Survey responses were recorded on a 4-point Likert scale with the following ratings: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. N/A (not applicable) was also an available response. The survey questions asked parents to rate the District's performance on important procedures and features within the special education/504 process.

Questions regarding access to staff received the highest ratings at 87% or above. Other highlights are below.

Questions receiving at least 80% strongly agree/agree include:

- My child's evaluation report is written in terms I understand.
- The school and/or district has a person on staff who is available to answer my questions.
- Teachers treat me as a team member.
- Information I receive regarding my child is understandable.
- At the IEP meeting, we discussed accommodations and modifications that my child would need.
- Teachers are available to speak with me at a mutually agreed time.
- The school and/or district offers me a variety of ways to communicate with teachers.

Questions receiving a rating of at least 70% strongly agree/agree were:

- My concerns and recommendations were documented on the IEP.
- The school and/or district provides me and my family with the help we need to play an active role in my child's education.
- I was given copies of all pertinent information at least 3 school days in advance of the Individualized Educational Program (IEP) meeting (reports, goals, etc.).
- Teachers and administrators show sensitivity to the needs of students with disabilities and their families.
- I am considered an equal partner with teachers and other professionals in my child's program.
- I was informed who would attend the meeting.

While all questions offer us the opportunity for reflection and growth, questions receiving a response rate of less than 50% have been earmarked to be addressed immediately in the 2018-19 school year. These include:

- I was offered special assistance (such as an interpreter) so that I could participate in the IEP meeting.
- I was given information about groups and/or organizations that offer support for parents of students with disabilities.
- The school and/or district provides information on supports available to allow my child to participate in extracurricular activities.
- The school and/or district explains (verbally and in writing) what options I have if I disagree with a decision of the school.
- At the IEP meeting, we discussed how my child would participate in statewide assessments (Grades 3-8.)
- The school and/or district provides information on the various options for services offered at the school and in the district that address my child's needs.
- I have been asked for my feedback about how well special education services are meeting my child's needs.
- Teachers and administrators respect our family's cultural heritage.
- I received written explanation as to why and to what extent my child may not receive all or some services in the general education classroom.

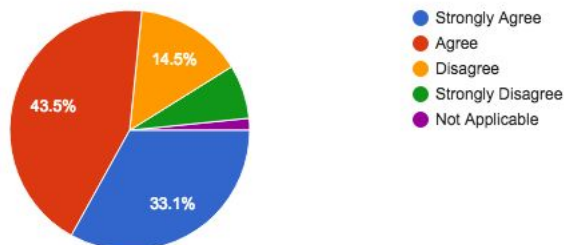
District 64 Special Education Parent Survey 2018

RESULTS

1

I am considered an equal partner with teachers and other professionals in my child's program.

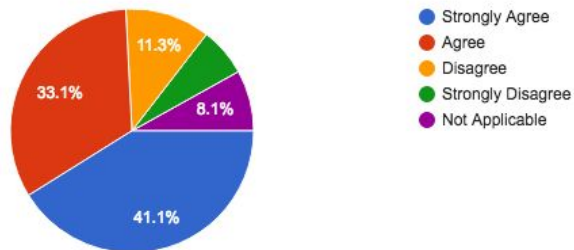
124 responses



2

I was given copies of all pertinent information at least 3 school days in advance of the Individualized Education...m (IEP) meeting (reports, goals, etc.)

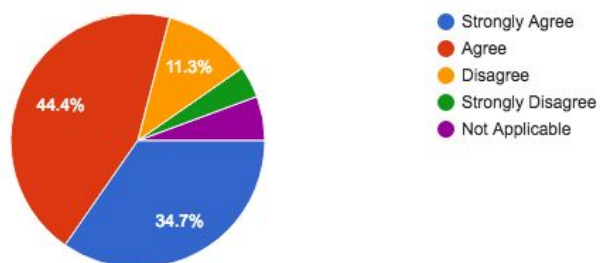
124 responses



3

I was informed who would attend the meeting.

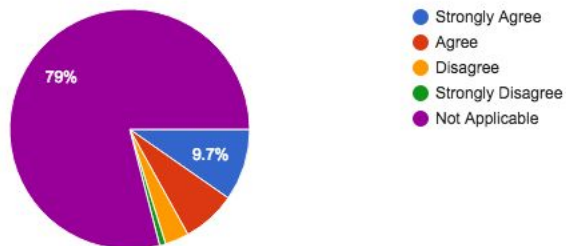
124 responses



4

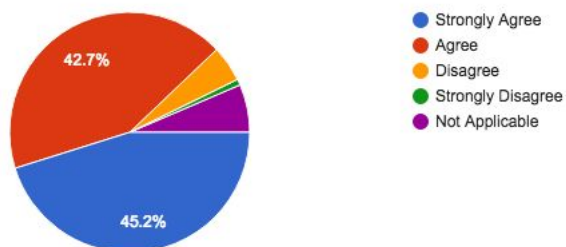
I was offered special assistance (such as an interpreter) so that I could participate in the IEP meeting.

124 responses



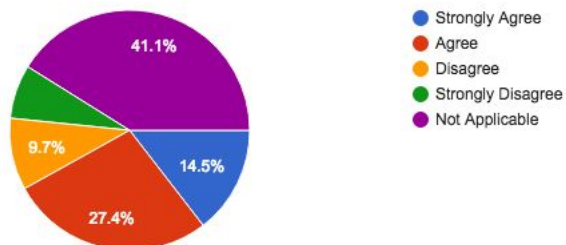
At the IEP meeting, we discussed accommodations and modifications that my child would need.

124 responses



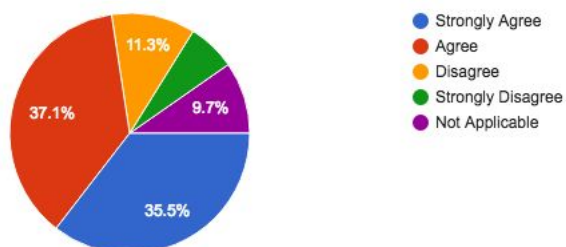
At the IEP meeting, we discussed how my child would participate in statewide assessments (Grades 3-8.)

124 responses



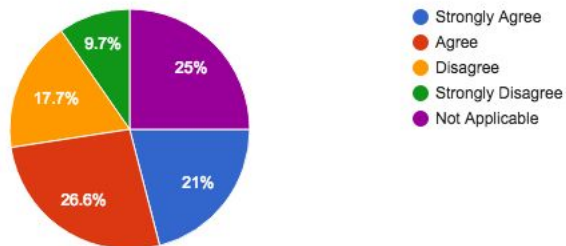
My concerns and recommendations were documented on the IEP.

124 responses



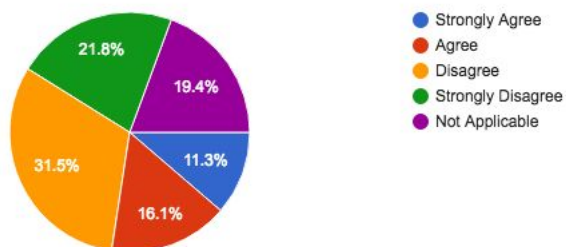
I received written explanation as to why and to what extent my child may not receive all or some services in the general education classroom.

124 responses



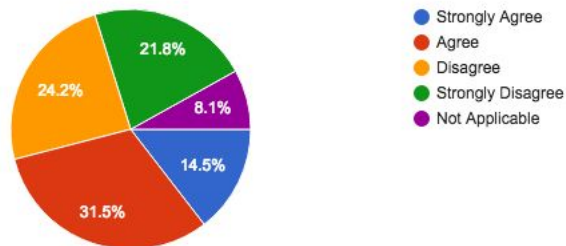
I was given information about groups and/or organizations that offer support for parents of students with disabilities.

124 responses



I have been asked for my feedback about how well special education services are meeting my child's needs.

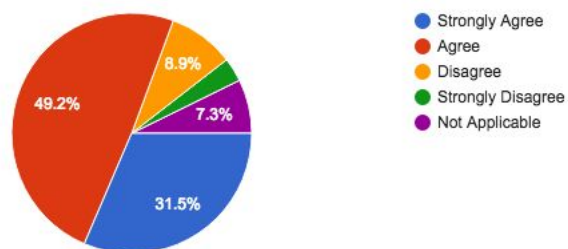
124 responses



11

My child's evaluation report is written in terms I understand.

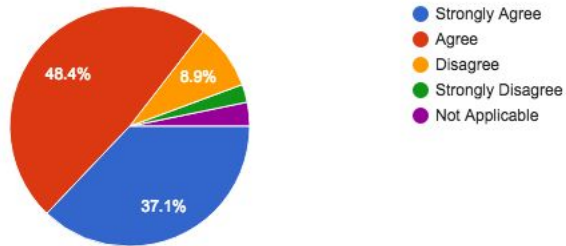
124 responses



12

Information I receive regarding my child is understandable.

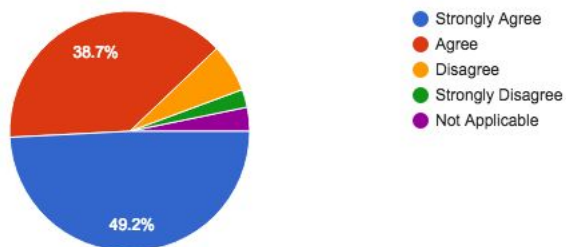
124 responses



13

Teachers are available to speak with me at a mutually agreed time.

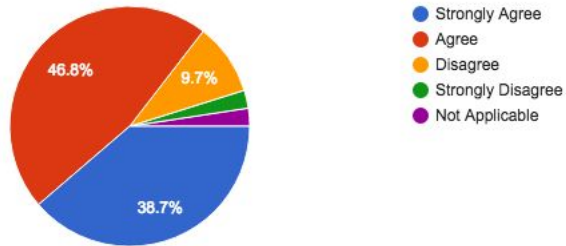
124 responses



14

Teachers treat me as a team member.

124 responses

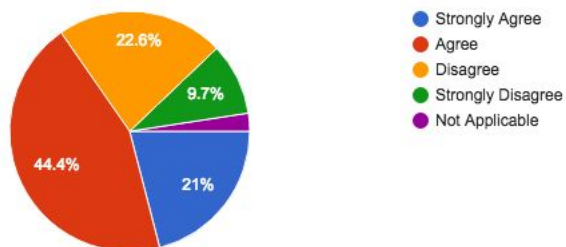


15

SECTION: TEACHERS & ADMINISTRATORS

Teachers and administrators seek out my input.

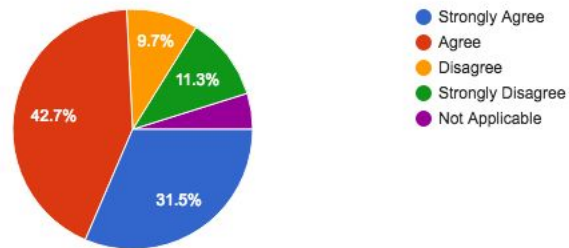
124 responses



16

Teachers and administrators show sensitivity to the needs of students with disabilities and their families.

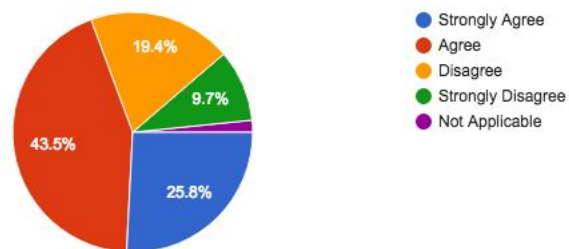
124 responses



17

Teachers and administrators encourage me to participate in the decision-making process.

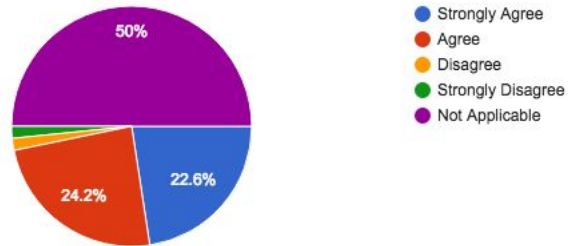
124 responses



18

Teachers and administrators respect our family's cultural heritage.

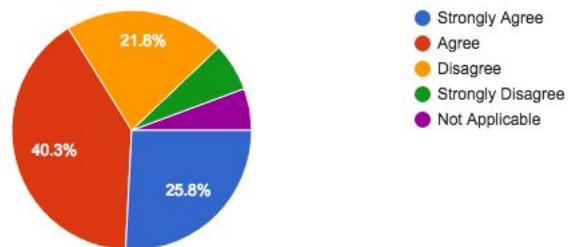
124 responses



19

Teachers and administrators ensure that I have fully understood the Procedural Safeguards (the rules in federal law that protect the rights of parents/guardians.)

124 responses

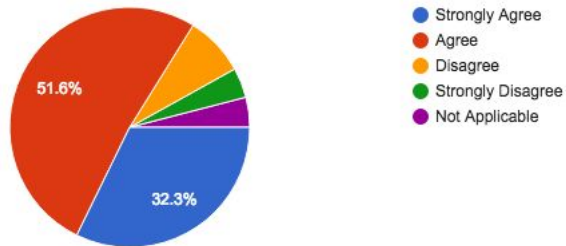


20

SECTION: THE SCHOOL AND/OR DISTRICT

The school and/or district has a person on staff who is available to answer my questions.

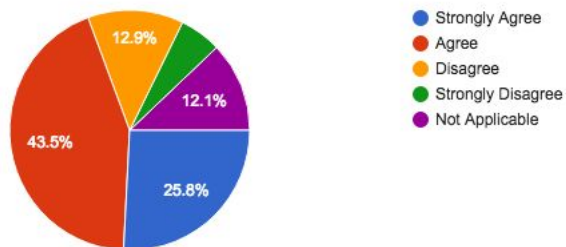
124 responses



21

The school and/or district is able to provide data/evidence regarding my child's progress on IEP goals.

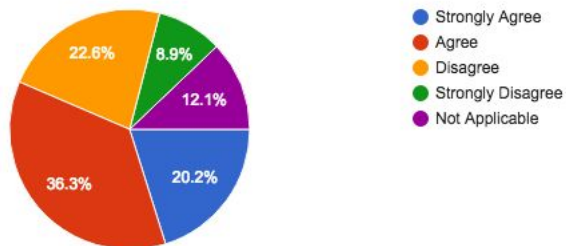
124 responses



22

The school and/or district communicates with me with sufficient regularity regarding my child's progress on IEP goals.

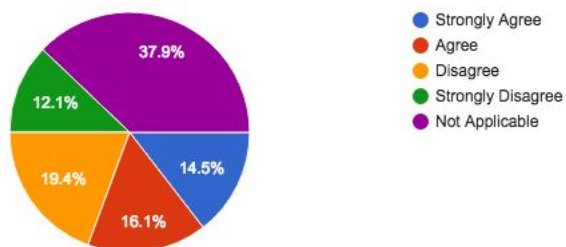
124 responses



23

The school and/or district provides information on supports available to allow my child to participate in extracurricular activities.

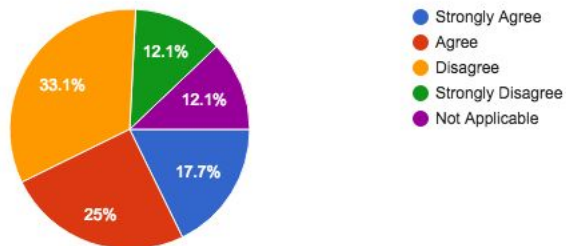
124 responses



24

The school and/or district provides information on the various options for services offered at the school and in the district that address my child's needs.

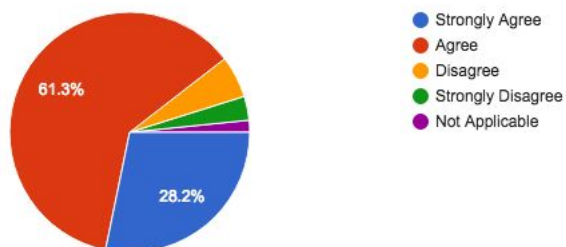
124 responses



25

The school and/or district offers me a variety of ways to communicate with teachers.

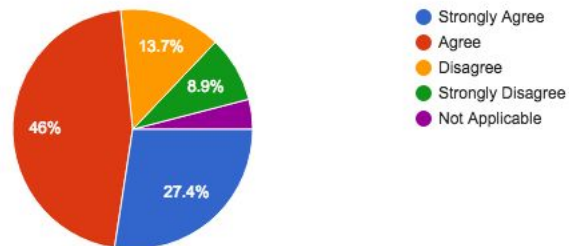
124 responses



26

The school and/or district provides me and my family with the help we need to play an active role in my child's education.

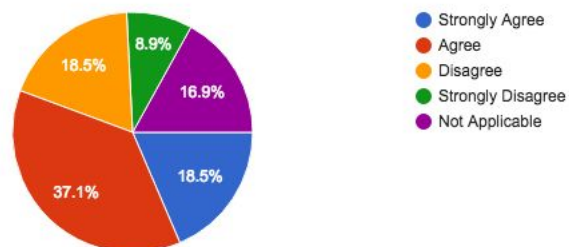
124 responses



27

The school and/or district provides information and support on transitions (grade-to-grade, early childhood to kindergarten, and middle school to high school.)

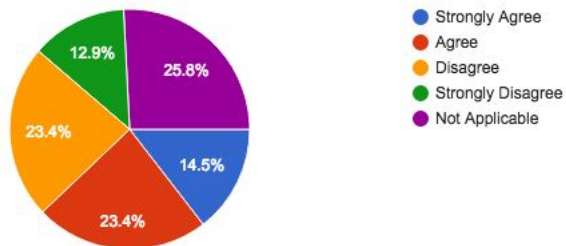
124 responses



28

The school and/or district explains (verbally and in writing) what options I have if I disagree with a decision of the school.

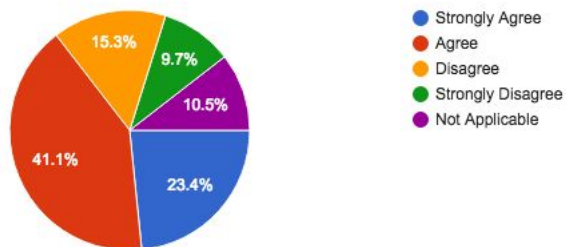
124 responses



29

The school and/or district effectively implements the accommodations listed on my child's IEP.

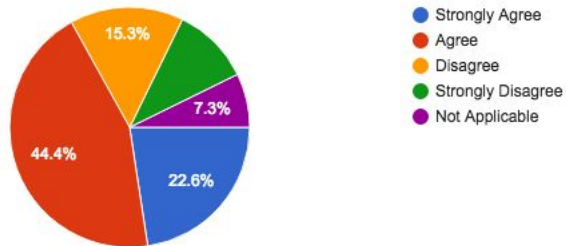
124 responses



30

The school and/or district provides written/digital information about workshops for parents.

124 responses



Special Education Survey Summary of Staff Responses - Spring 2018

The staff survey on special education was conducted during the same time period as the parent survey. The goal of the survey was to gather feedback about areas of strength and opportunities for growth. It included 23 questions grouped in seven key areas: curriculum and instruction; intervention programs; service delivery model; professional development; accolades; climate; and collaborative decision making. Survey responses were recorded on a 5-point scale from never (1) to always (5).

General education and special education teachers, related service staff and teacher assistants participated in the online survey; responses were anonymous. In all, 88 responses were received.

Survey responses that had a 50% or higher rating of (4) or (5-always) on a 5-point scale were:

- **Curriculum and instruction:** Staff discusses instructional strategies and curriculum issues when needed. I use multiple curricular resources to address student academic needs. I use multiple interventions to address social emotional needs. I use multiple service delivery models (direct instruction, co-teaching, consultation, etc.) to address the needs of my students.
- **Intervention programs:** Individual student needs are considered when selecting intervention programs to implement. I have the resources I need to educate the students on my caseload, and when an intervention is not effectively meeting student needs, I have alternative options to try.
- **Service delivery model:** We offer a robust continuum of services to students with special needs. Individual student needs are considered when selecting how IEP services will be delivered.
- **Professional development:** I feel confident measuring IEP goals. I feel well-trained in the curriculum I deliver. If I need additional training, my needs are addressed through additional training and support.
- **Accolades:** We celebrate the success of our special education students. We celebrate successes as a school. We celebrate success as a department.
- **Climate:** Staff seeks to define and problem-solve the problem/issue rather than blame others. Staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them how to address student needs. My work environment is supportive and inviting place for staff to work. I have the tools I need to be successful at work. I have the tools I need to help students to reach their goals.
- **Collaborative Decision Making:** I am involved in selecting the interventions and resources to use with my students.

Areas for growth identified by the survey include:

- **Professional development:** More training is needed in writing IEP goals and how to measure IEP goals.

- **Collaborative decision making:** Staff report not feeling involved in selecting interventions and the IEP team considers all opinions before decisions are made.

Additional comments contributed by staff focused on their desire for more professional development, professional input in curriculum and interventions, and more collaboration between teachers and administration.

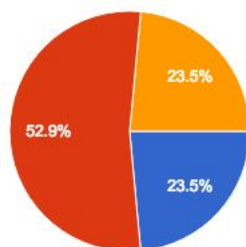
District 64 Special Education Staff Survey 2018

RESULTS

1

What is your current role?

17 responses



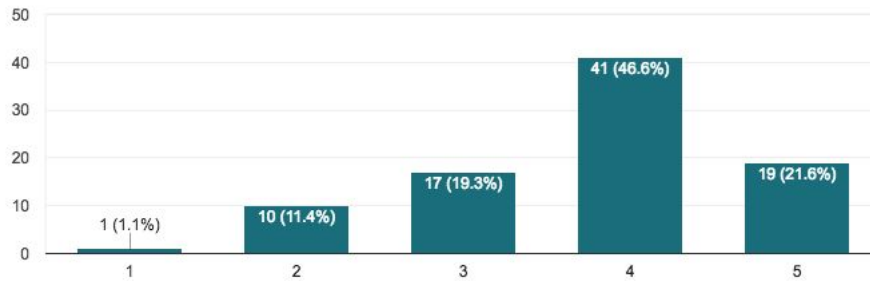
- Student Services Staff
- General Education Teacher
- Teacher Assistant

2

SECTION: CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION

Staff discusses instructional strategies and curriculum issues when needed.

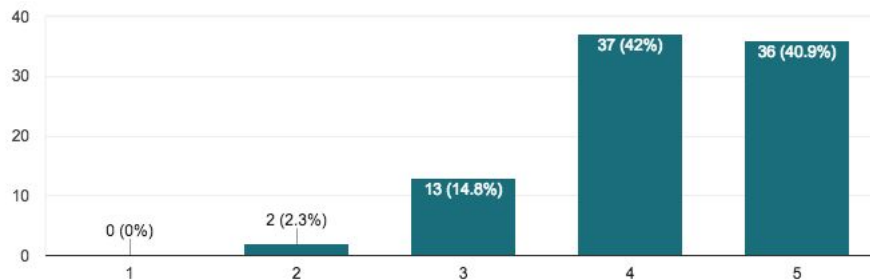
88 responses



3

I use multiple curricular resources to address student academic needs.

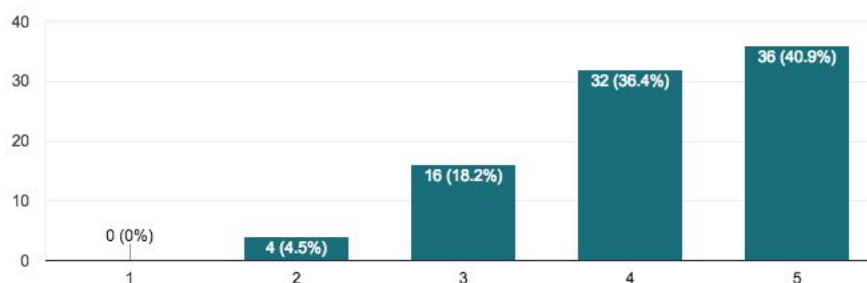
88 responses



4

I use multiple interventions to address student social emotional needs.

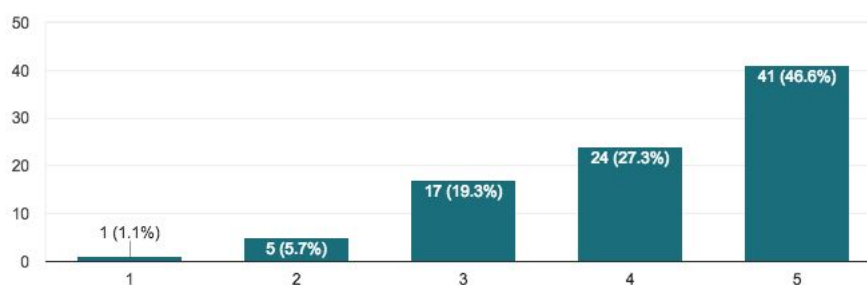
88 responses



5

I use multiple service delivery methods (direct instruction, co-teaching, consultation, etc.) to address the needs of my students.

88 responses

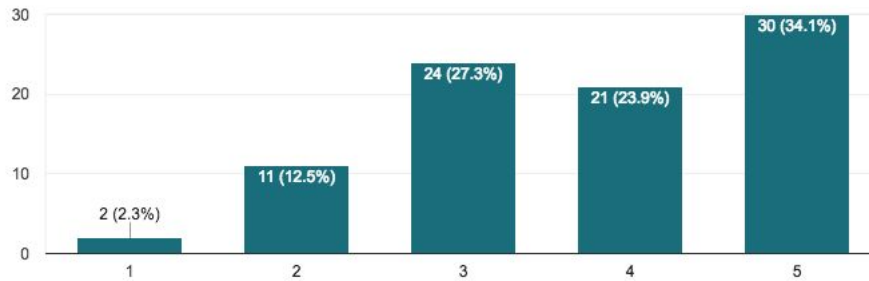


6

SECTION: INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

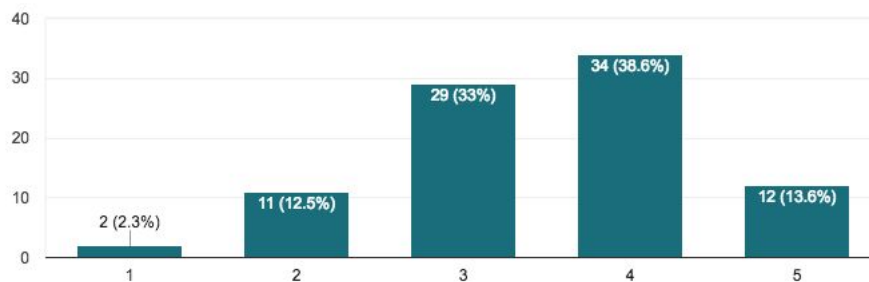
Individual student needs are considered when selecting intervention programs to implement.

88 responses



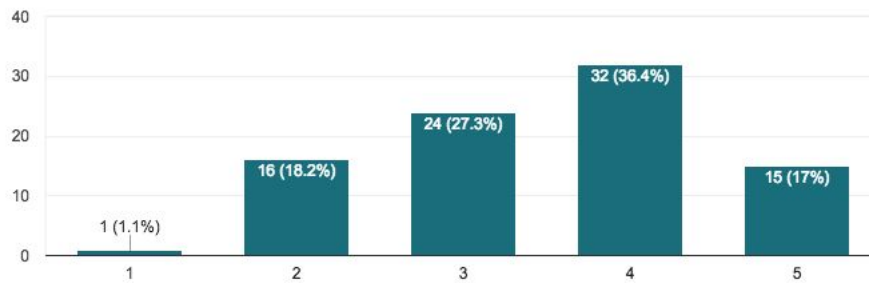
I have the resources I need to educate the students on my caseload.

88 responses



When an intervention is not effectively meeting student needs, I have alternative options to try.

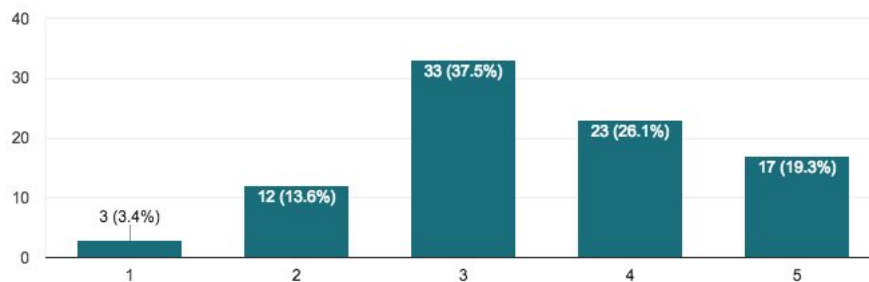
88 responses



SECTION: SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL

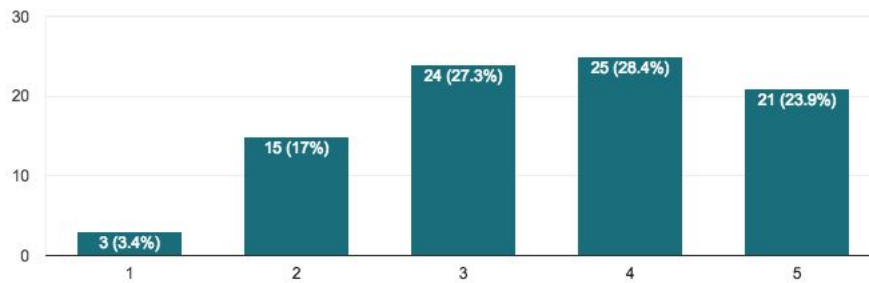
We offer a robust continuum of services to students with special needs.

88 responses



Individual student needs are considered when selecting how IEP services will be delivered.

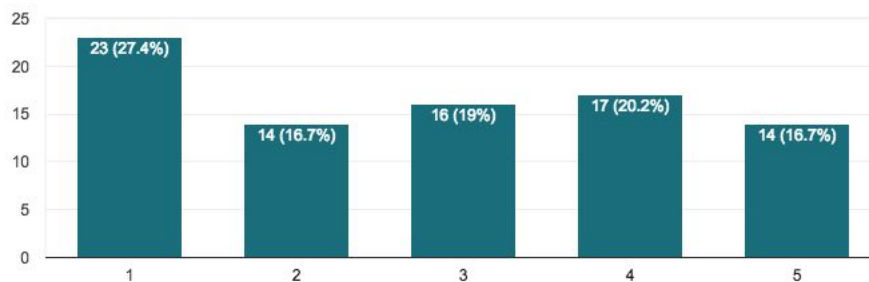
88 responses



SECTION: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

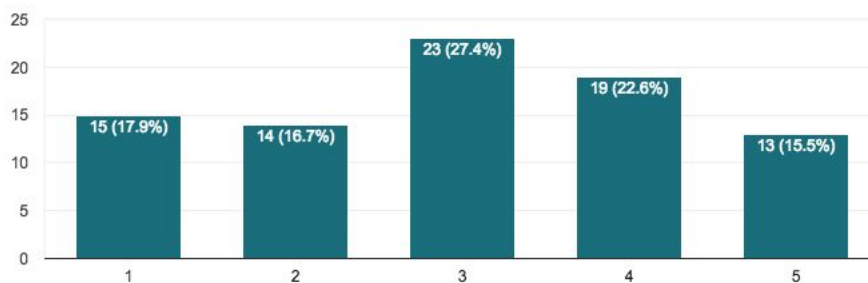
I feel confident writing IEP goals.

84 responses



I feel confident measuring IEP goals.

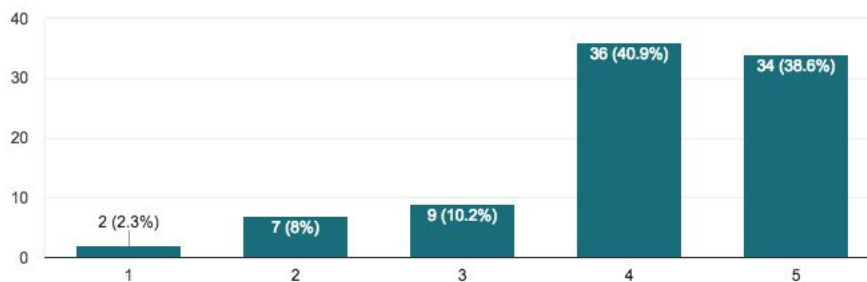
84 responses



13

I feel well-trained in the curriculums I deliver.

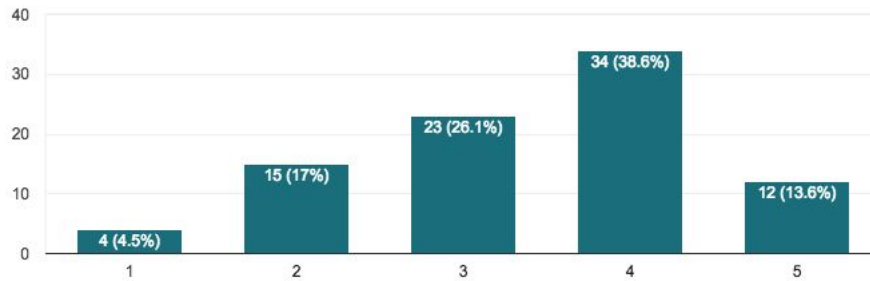
88 responses



14

If I need additional training, my needs are addressed through additional training and support.

88 responses

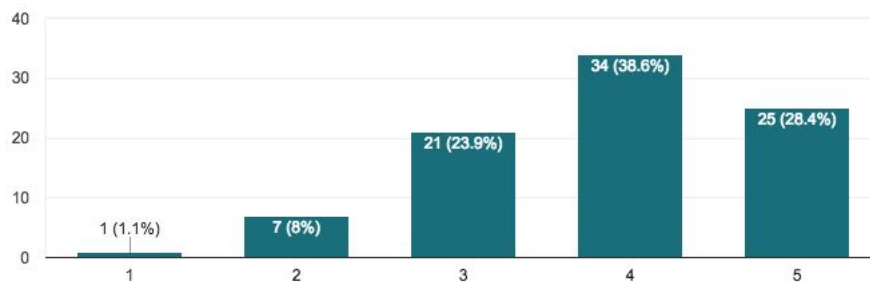


15

SECTION: ACCOLADES

We celebrate the success of our special education students.

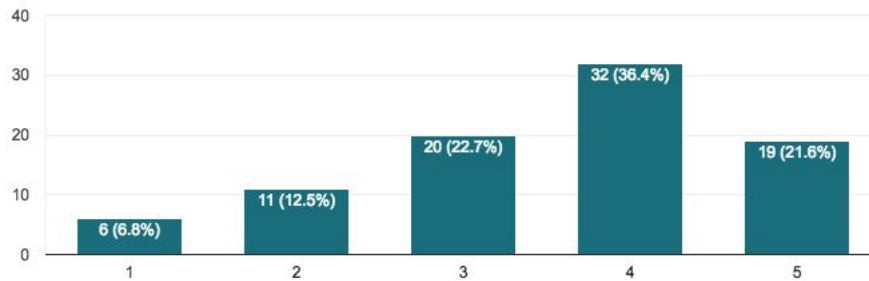
88 responses



16

We celebrate successes as a school.

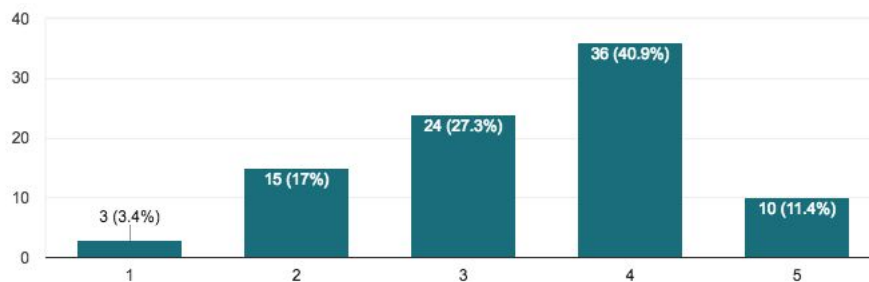
88 responses



17

We celebrate successes as a department.

88 responses

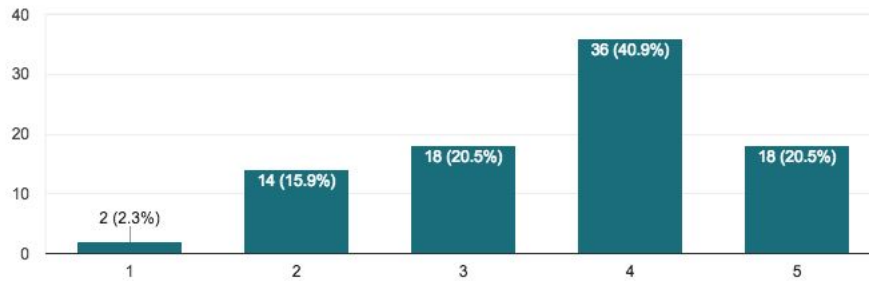


18

SECTION: CLIMATE

Staff seeks to define and problem-solve the problem/issue rather than blame others.

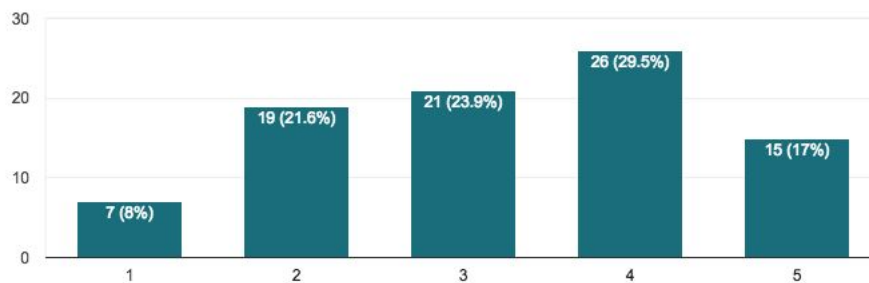
88 responses



19

Staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them how to address student needs.

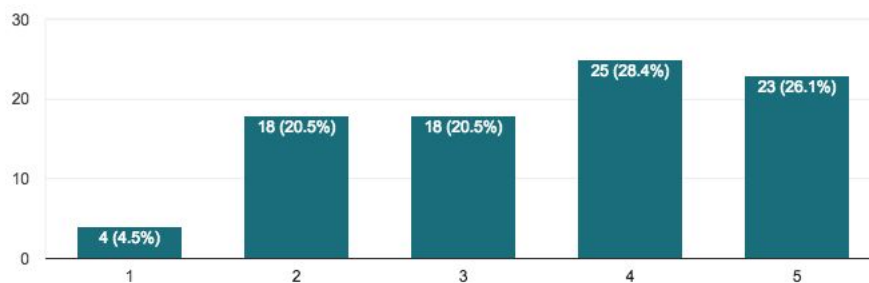
88 responses



20

My work environment is a supportive and inviting place for staff to work.

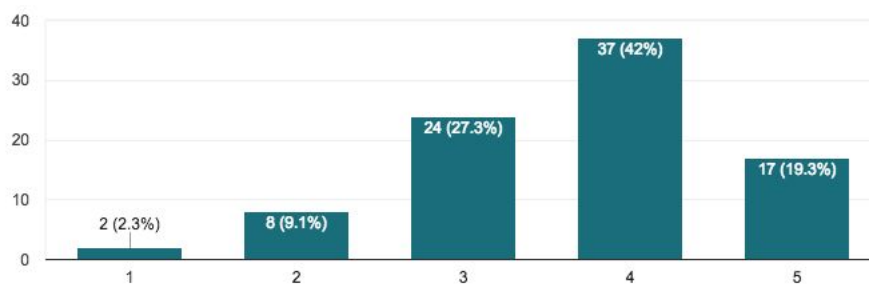
88 responses



21

I have the tools I need to be successful at work.

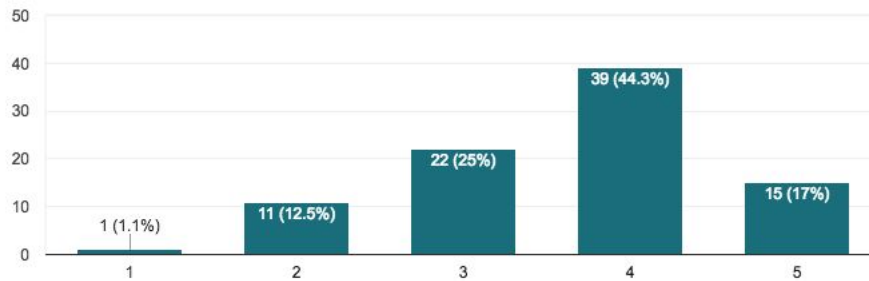
88 responses



22

I have the tools I need to help students to reach their goals.

88 responses

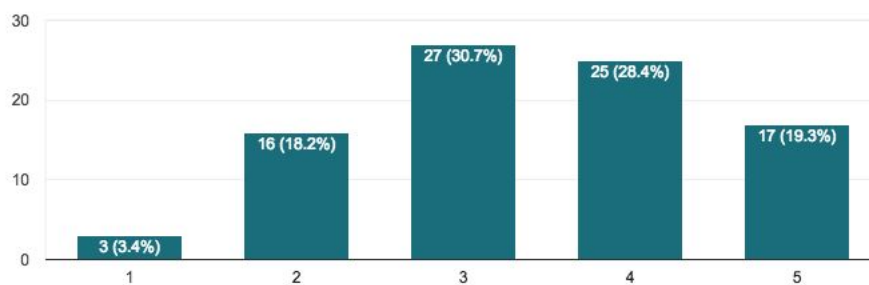


23

SECTION: COLLABORATIVE DECISION MAKING

I am involved in selecting the interventions and resources to use with my students.

88 responses



24

The IEP team considers all opinions before decisions are made.

88 responses

