

Special Needs Subcommittee Meeting  
**Review of Results of Special Education Survey 2016**

*Meeting Notes from July 12, 2016*

Attendance: Sara Austin, Angelique Burzynski, Nancy Goldstein, Kim Lesak, Terry Munoz, Lourdes Nonato, and Lindy Yuen.

**Distribution**

Distribution went well, with a couple of exceptions: middle school didn't get hard copies until after the deadline (because there was no homeroom during testing), people in the district under a settlement didn't receive either.

Response rate was the best yet, with 135 respondents (compared with 99 in 2015 and 58 in 2014). Gives us greater confidence that the results are representative. Thanks to those who entered hard copies into Excel (Angelique, Lourdes, Dina, Marcile).

A few cases of confusion about the 5-point scale (from very strongly disagree to very strongly agree): some people who clearly meant to give positive responses gave negative; we contacted these, and they corrected their responses.

See appendix A for respondent demographic breakdown. Nancy felt these were roughly representative of the district as a whole.

**Overview of Survey Results, 2014-16** (see appendix B). *Note: results in appendices are **slightly** different from those discussed in meeting, because we received 4 late surveys, which are now included in the data.*

This overview shows the average response, categorized as positive or negative, to each question.

The main takeaways from this overview are that:

the vast majority of parents think the district is doing very well; the percentage of negative responses to almost all questions has shrunk

the weakest point remains communication of reports and supporting documentation from case carriers to parents.

**School Breakdown and Race/Ethnicity Breakdown**

In response to questions that arose during survey planning about the purpose of demographic questions, Sara chose to analyze the rankings given in two of these areas to see if we got interesting results: school level and race/ethnicity/ELL. It should be noted that reports of negative responses below are all in the context of the very high average scores mentioned above. The analysis below focuses on negative responses as a way of identifying areas for improvement. The results were:

### *School Breakdown (see appendix C)*

There were consistent differences across the questions among schools in levels of satisfaction: preschool parents were most satisfied, followed by the middle and high schools; elementary school parents were least satisfied.

The middle school showed the lowest satisfaction on questions relating to the communication of progress reports, with nearly 50% disagreeing (as we might expect given the known problems at the middle school). But parents at **all** except the preschool are more likely to express dissatisfaction with getting progress reports than any other aspect of special education we asked about.

Middle school parents were the most likely (over 25%) to express dissatisfaction with their relationship with nonteacher special education staff.

Over 20% of high school parents expressed dissatisfaction with their relationship with their teacher. More than 20% of parents at the high school also said that their child was **not** getting services listed in his/her IEP.

Parents of students at NPS or SELPA schools were significantly more likely to express dissatisfaction at the IEP decision than those at SPUSD schools.

### *Race/Ethnicity Breakdown (see appendix D)*

The average of all questions shows that parents of White nonhispanic students are most satisfied, followed by parents of Latino/Hispanic students, then Asian-American. These did not seem to shift much relative to one another across the questions. The responses of parents of African American students, however, were quite variable and may not be reliable, as there were only 6 responses in this category. Non-ELL levels of satisfaction were similar to those of White students, while ELL levels of satisfaction were similar to Hispanic/Latino levels.

We discussed the possibility that there may be cultural differences in how different groups respond to surveys. But even if this is so, parents' attitudes can affect student performance, so the issue is worth tackling. The WASC objectives are to diminish the differences between races on performance. We raised the question of whether it's possible to get more detailed information about how race/ethnicity is affecting student experience through this survey.

### **Results from Survey and SNC Goals for 2016-17 Year**

We suggested breaking down the report of positive responses (see appendix E) and recommendations for improvement by school for sharing with teachers at each school level, along with the overview of survey results (appendix B). Question of who could share this information and how.

The numbers of negative responses (appendix F) were in general too few to give us much information to work with. The exception is the comments on communication of reports and other documentation, which may help us to focus our efforts in this area.

As in previous years, the strongest message from the survey is that the district can improve its communication with parents, particularly in the area of providing and explaining progress reports and supporting documentation. Angelique suggested that a way of addressing this was to have a progress report day for special education staff in which all the staff at a site together wrote up progress reports (with subs taking classes). Often the pressures of time are the limiting factor, not the willingness to do the reports. Nancy also suggested that the district could do more to communicate information about how long the district has to perform certain tasks (such as calling an IEP meeting).

We talked about both sides of expectations—whether teachers have realistic expectations for children; whether parents' expectations for the IEP process are appropriate. We also talked about the possibility of a more explicit statement of expectations—a “contract” of some sort between teachers and parents that could happen at the beginning of the year; this might help to avoid misunderstandings. There is an introductory letter distributed at the beginning of the year, but it is mostly about requirements.

Interest in ongoing parent nights, as well as the parent forum and conference, remains strong (see appendix E, end). The top five requested topics for parents education nights were: Teaching parents how to help their child succeed in school: 39; Behavior support in the classroom and home: 29; How to ease the transition from elementary to middle school, middle school to high school, and post-high school: 28; Pathways to participation in general education: 19; IEP 101: A Parent's Guide to IEPs:18. Since interest in transition issues remains high, we can use the responses from surveys about transitions in planning those meetings (appendix E).

### **Recommendations for future surveys**

For better distribution, we think case carriers would be most likely to carry through if the request to distribute came directly from Dennis's office.

We would like to see more teacher involvement in developing questions. We have a baseline of very positive, and improving, results almost across the board with questions primarily focused on IEPs and compliance with the law; now we can ask more specific questions. We could concentrate on getting fuller information in those areas that are of greatest concern and also solicit information that teachers want. Get someone at each site meeting of special needs staff to solicit, for example, 10 questions, which we could then collate.