

# HINSDALE TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 86



## SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENT SURVEY REPORT

*JANUARY 2011*



# I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

## **Holistic Finding**

Overall, the majority of parents are satisfied with the quality of the Special Education Program in District 86. However, it is clear that the program provides very individual experiences for parents and students. Many parents rave about the program and all of the benefits it has provided their children, while others have not had as positive of an experience. Others are more neutral in their feelings. Strengths of the program include the highly qualified, caring, dedicated and supportive staff, appropriate placement of students in the program, and educational plans for students to meet their individual needs. Areas for improvement mentioned most frequently by parents include the need for additional training and professional development, enhanced communication among administration, special education staff and parents, and improved support during the transitional phase of the program.

## **Sample Characteristics**

The response rate to the survey was 21 percent, which is consistent with special program surveys in similar school districts. Survey response was consistent among grades and schools, ensuring a representative sample and the validity of survey results. The estimated margin of error to be used for survey items in this report is +/- 5 percent.

## **Special Education Programming**

The vast majority of parents are aware of their children's Individualized Education Plans and how the IEP process works, and also are aware of their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Most parents are satisfied with the communication they receive from the case managers assigned to their children, although feelings are more polarized in this area, indicating differences in individual experiences among parents. Overall, the majority of parents agree that the District 86 special education staff are professional and knowledgeable, and that parent meetings are useful. They appreciate the extracurricular opportunities offered to their students. Parents are more neutral in their perceptions of district transportation services, the effectiveness of assessments in the program, and the usefulness of district communication and parent reports.

## **Consistency of Ratings Between Schools**

Overall, the ratings of items between schools were similar. There was only one item that showed a statistically significant difference between schools. Parents at Hinsdale Central indicated higher levels of agreement than Hinsdale South parents to the statement that District assessment reports are useful in understanding their children's progress.

## II. DATA

### A. Overall Quality

#### Item 1. I am satisfied with the overall quality of the District's Special Education Program.

Rating	Parent %
Strongly Agree	29 %
Agree	37 %
Neutral	11 %
Disagree	15 %
Strongly Disagree	7 %

As illustrated in the chart above, the majority of parents agree or strongly agree that they are satisfied with the quality of the District 86 Special Education Program. These ratings are consistent with ECRA experience in conducting surveys of a similar nature in with similar school districts. Just a little more than one-fifth of parents responding to the survey do not agree that they are satisfied. Parents were asked to follow up to this item with an open-ended response asking to elaborate on their rating.

Open-ended responses indicated highly individualized experiences for parents and students, and this is consistent with the findings of similar surveys of special programs of other school districts.

Parents who responded with strongly agree or agree explained that the special education staff have been excellent – citing them as caring, professional, highly educated, supportive and responsive to the needs of their children. They also feel that communication about their child's progress is consistent. These parents feel their children were placed appropriately in the program according to individual abilities and challenges, and that appropriate plans of action have been developed for their children. Some parents feel they are in a true partnership with the special education team, and that there is an environment of collaboration throughout the program. Other parents say the program has high standards and expectations of students.

Parents who responded with disagree or strongly disagree stated that the program has not met their children's needs for various reasons. Some say the communication between the special education teachers and general education teachers needs improvement. Some feel that there is a lack of planning for their students, and lack of training and professional development for staff and administration. Others feel that there is simply lack of support throughout the district for the program. Some parents are not seeing the gains in their children that they feel should be achieved. Others cite unsatisfactory communication and staff turnover as being problematic, and would like to see improvement in the teaching of life skills and independence in the transitional phase of the program.

### B. Special Education Programming

**Percent of Parent Distributions for Special Education Programming Items\***

↓ Sorted in descending order

#	Item	Parents		
		% SA/A	% N	% D/SD
10.	I am aware of the modifications and accommodations that are identified by my child’s IEP.	86	7	8
8.	I understand the IEP (Individualized Education Program) process.	85	9	7
11.	I have adequate levels of communication with my child’s special education case manager.	78	8	13
5.	The District provides opportunities for my child to participate in after-school clubs and activities.	77	12	11
9.	I know my parental rights as provided by the federal law called “Individuals with Disabilities Education Act” (IDEA).	77	17	6
12.	The special education staff that work with my child are knowledgeable and professional.	77	11	12
3.	Parent meetings regarding the Special Education Program are useful.	75	15	10
6.	District transportation services are meeting the needs of my child.	68	23	10
4.	District assessment reports are useful in understanding my child’s progress.	63	21	17
2.	District communication and parent reports are useful in understanding district programming.	60	16	24
7.	Assistive technology services are meeting the needs of my child.	57	26	17

\*Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

**KEY**  High levels of agreement  
 Neutral or Polarized Responses  
 Lack of Agreement

**C. Sample Characteristics and Other Items**

**Survey Response**

	<b>Number</b>
<b>Surveys Distributed</b>	582
<b>Surveys Returned</b>	123
<b>Response Rate</b>	<b>21 %</b>

**Responses by School**

	<b>Percent of Responses</b>
<b>Hinsdale Central</b>	52 %
<b>Hinsdale South</b>	48 %

**Responses by Grade\***

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Percent of Responses</b>
<b>9</b>	24 %
<b>10</b>	18 %
<b>11</b>	23 %
<b>12</b>	20 %
<b>12+</b>	16 %

*\*Responses do not add to 100 due to rounding*

**Item 15. Please select the programs or services that your child receives in special education.\***

↓ *Sorted in descending order*

<b>Program/Service</b>	<b>Percent of Responses</b>
Resource	77 %
Social Work	42 %
Instructional	34 %
Speech/Language	31 %
Self-Contained Class	16 %
Physical Therapy	9 %
Occupation Therapy	9 %
Psychological Counseling	8 %
Don't Know	4 %
Other	17 %

*\*Percentages do not add to 100 due to allowance for multiple responses.*

**Self-Contained Classes included:** Adult Opportunities, Art/Music Therapy, Behavior-Anger Management, Foundation, Marklund, Personal Adjustment (on an as-needed basis), SOAR Program (3 responses)

**Other Classes included:** Assistive Tech (LADSE), Services from therapeutic schools outside district, Co-taught teacher instruction/classes, Concepts Alg/Geom and EngDymanics, Math and Reading, outplacement from District, Psychological counseling not through the school, seating arrangements and extra test time, SOAR Program.

**Item 16. Would you be interested in attending parent education workshops relating to Special Education needs?**

Response	Percent of Responses
Yes	29 %
No	16 %
Maybe, Depends on Topic	55 %

**Item 16a. From the list below, please select the three workshop topics that would most interest you.**

↓ *Sorted in descending order*

Workshop	Percent of Responses
Homework Strategies	39 %
Communicating with Your Teenager	21 %
Strategies for Managing Behavior of Teenagers (Anger, Bullying, Withdrawal, etc.)	20 %
Emotional/Behavioral Disorders	19 %
Attention Deficit Disorder with Hyperactivity (ADHD)	18 %
Assistive Technology Strategies/Interventions	17 %
Parent Stress Reduction	15 %
Autism or Pervasive Developmental Disorders	7 %
Asperger’s Syndrome	7 %
Dealing with Alcohol and Substance Abuse	2 %
Other (1 <sup>st</sup> Option)	19 %
Other (2 <sup>nd</sup> Option)	4 %

**Other Workshop topics mentioned were:** ADD (organizing your ADD student); Adult benefits – employment, transition, opportunities; College options for Learning Disability Children; college readiness – ACT/SAT logistics; developments in high school education reading and writing programs and the tracking and grading equivalencies utilized in IEPs, Education Dist 86 staff on residential facilities and different approaches; executive functioning (2); finding employment for adults with disabilities; technology adaptation for the classroom in college (i.e., note takers, recorders); new research/techniques in special ed; Planning for transition from HS; prader willi syndrome; specifically bullying and teasing because these students learn in a different way; strategies in working with 3<sup>rd</sup> party school staff-non social workers and those with no clinical education; transition to college (4).

For the last three items on the survey, parents were asked to respond to open-ended questions about their experience with the special education program. Responses have been summarized.

**Item 17. How has the Special Education Program benefited your child?**

Many parents feel that the program is excellent, and that the Special Education administrators and staff are nurturing, dedicated and helpful. Parents appreciate that their children are placed in classes appropriate to their child's interests and abilities, and that extra help is provided when needed. They feel that the program assists with academic success, motivation and self esteem. Other skills it bolsters are homework skills, working with peers, test taking, job skills, daily living skills, learning to adapt to challenges, learning to be a self-advocate, and communication skills. Some say that the assistive technology has benefited their children. Parents also feel the program provides a safe environment for their children, and appreciate the opportunities to be part of the community experience as well as athletics and other extracurricular activities. Others simply credit the highly qualified staff for the progress their children have made in the program.

Some parents responded that the program has not helped their children as they would hope. Some say it depends on the case manager and has differed on a year to year basis, or that students with less severe problems do not get as much attention as those with more difficulty. Others feel that there needs to be additional parental and student support for the transition after grade 12.

**Item 18. How would you improve the Special Education Program? Please include any specific areas you would like to see targeted by the program.**

Parents offered various suggestions for improvement. The most frequently mentioned area for improvement was in training and professional development. Parents did not mention specific areas; rather, they feel that overall training and professional development need improvement. Others would like to see more staff accountability for follow-through on plans that have been laid out for students. Some feel that the relationship between the administration and parents could be improved, especially in the area of communication. Some parents with higher functioning students agree that the program is very beneficial for students with specific needs, but that more attention could be paid to higher functioning children and the students "in the middle", and that these students should be exposed more to regular high school situations – especially socializing with their peers. As mentioned in Item 17, some parents feel that there could be additional support in the transitional phase of the program.

**Item 19. Please provide any additional comments on any part of the district 86 Special Education Program.**

The additional comments illustrated that the special education program in District 86 is a very individualized experience for parents and students. Some parents continued to rave about the program and expressed how beneficial it has been to their children. They again credit the teachers and staff for their professionalism and excellence. Others feel that the program needs changes to improve its structure and delivery. Areas for improvement that were again mentioned in the comments section were communication between administration and staff and parents, improved training for staff, appropriate planning and goals set for students, and increased accountability for these plans.