

Needham SEPAC Survey
of
Parents' Impressions of
District Social Skills Services

Conducted October, 2009

Outline

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Overview

- Objective: To determine satisfaction of parents of Special Education students with Social Skills services
- Methodology: Committee of approx. 15 SEPAC parents created on-line survey and requested SPED parents to respond
- Respondents:
 - 62 respondents, representing 67 students
 - One answer/question/respondent (not per student)
 - 26% response rate (based on 240 members of SEPAC)
 - All schools represented
 - Broadmeadow, Pollard, and Newman with most responses

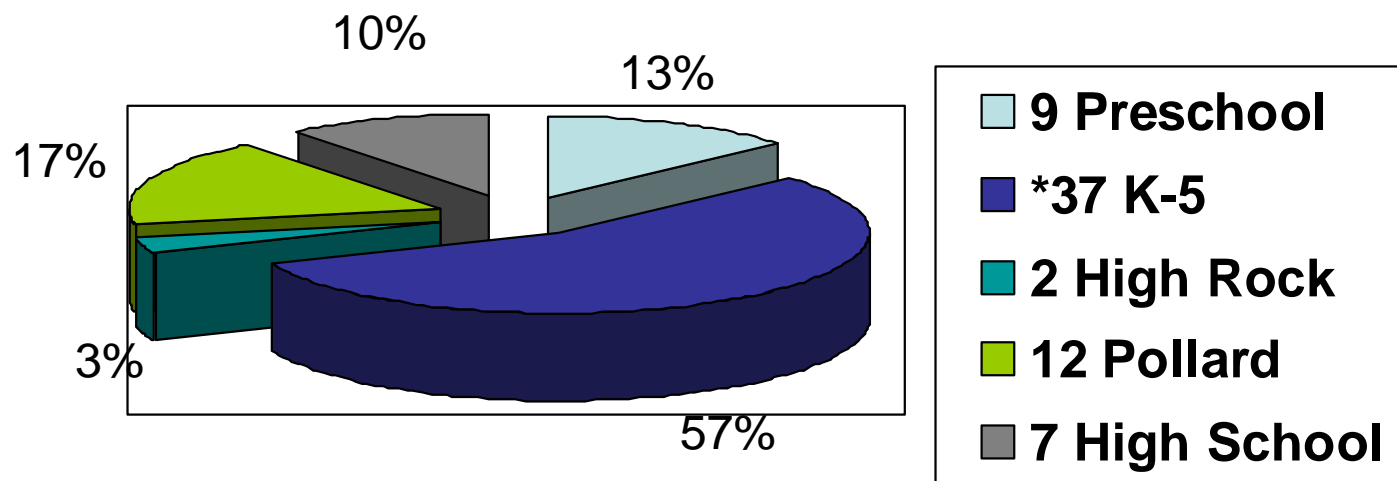
Findings

- Social Skills are on IEP of 76% of respondents
- 86% of respondents think their kids need special help with SS
- 63% of respondents are or have paid for private SS training
- 39% of respondents did not know if their child was exposed to Responsive Classroom or Second Step
- 48 % Satisfaction with SS training of own kids vs. 21% satisfaction with SS training of all kids

Conclusions

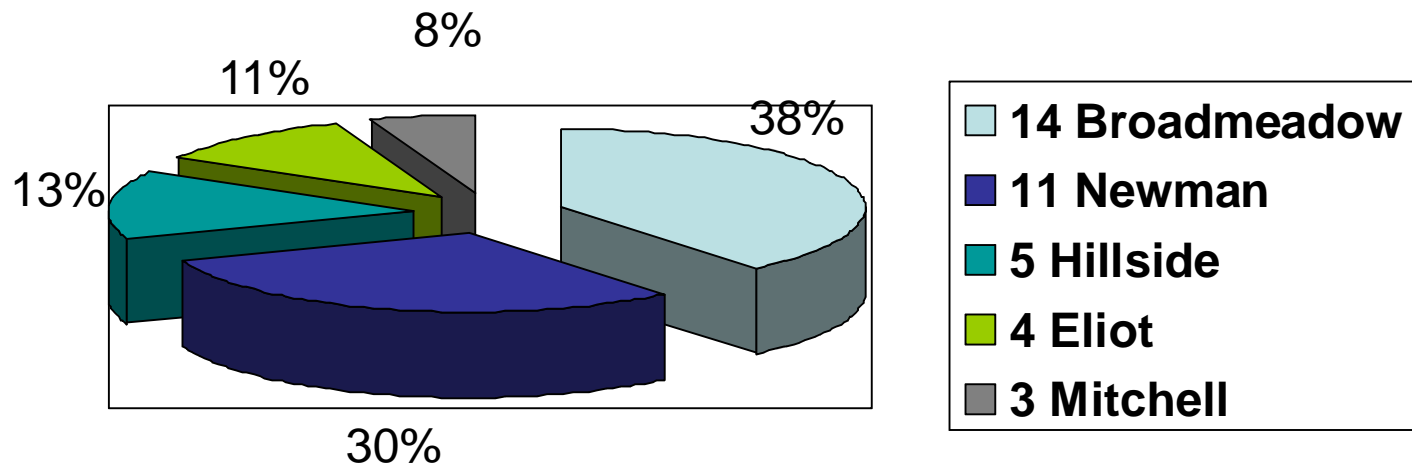
- SEPAC parents report significant unmet SS needs for all students
- Desire of parents for SS training of students matches District Social/Emotional Learning core value
- Gap in awareness of Second Step among parents matches gap in SEL survey of teachers training and use of Second Step
- Focus of parents' comments was on unstructured time – recess, bullying at lunch/recess, underscores need for generalized SS
- Satisfaction rating with SS training for their own child vs. all children reiterates parents desire for expanded SS training of general student population
- Parent's comments emphasize working with general student population's SS with Disability Awareness and whole class teaching

Survey Responses by Child's School



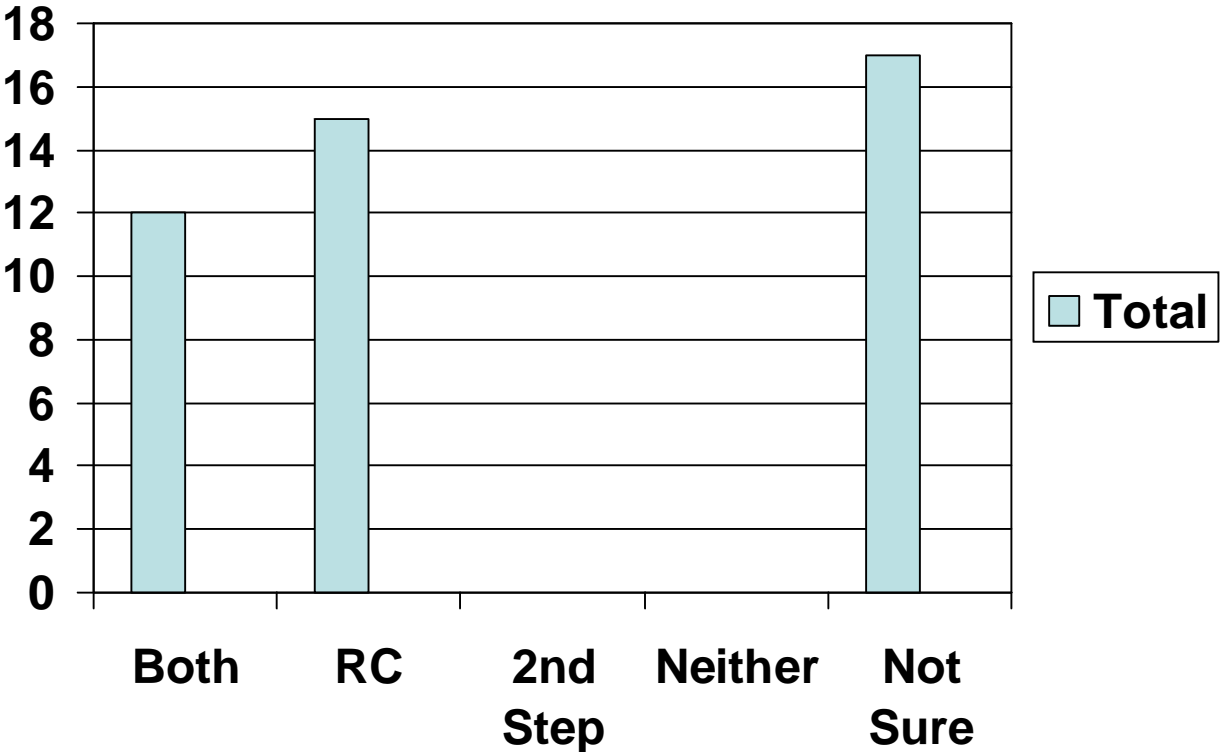
*Note: 5 respondents reported children at two or more schools.
Total by school = 67, Total responses = 62

Elementary Schools of Respondents' Children



Total Responses = 37

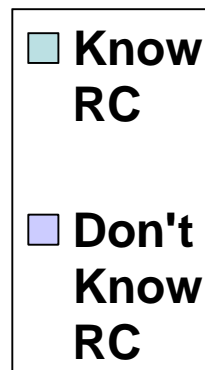
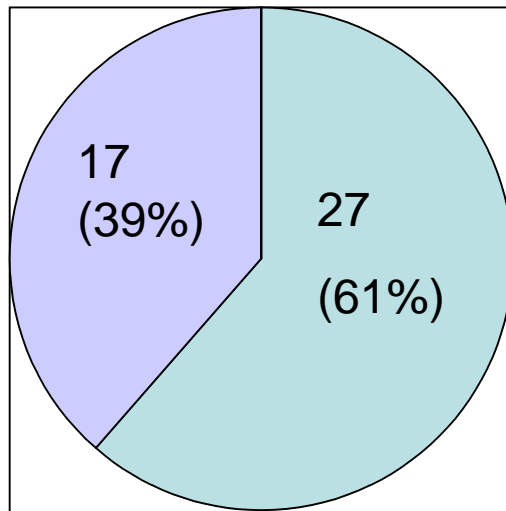
Use of Responsive Classroom and Second Step's in Child's Classroom



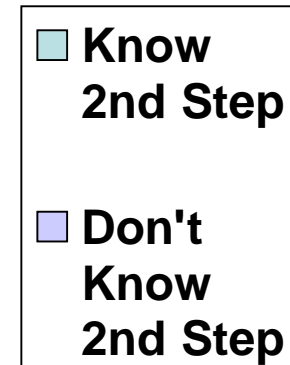
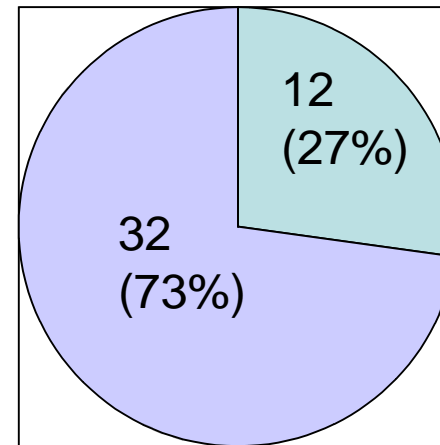
Note: Preschool and Elementary only = 44 responses

Preschool / Elementary Parents Familiar with Responsive Classroom and Second Step

Responsive
Classroom

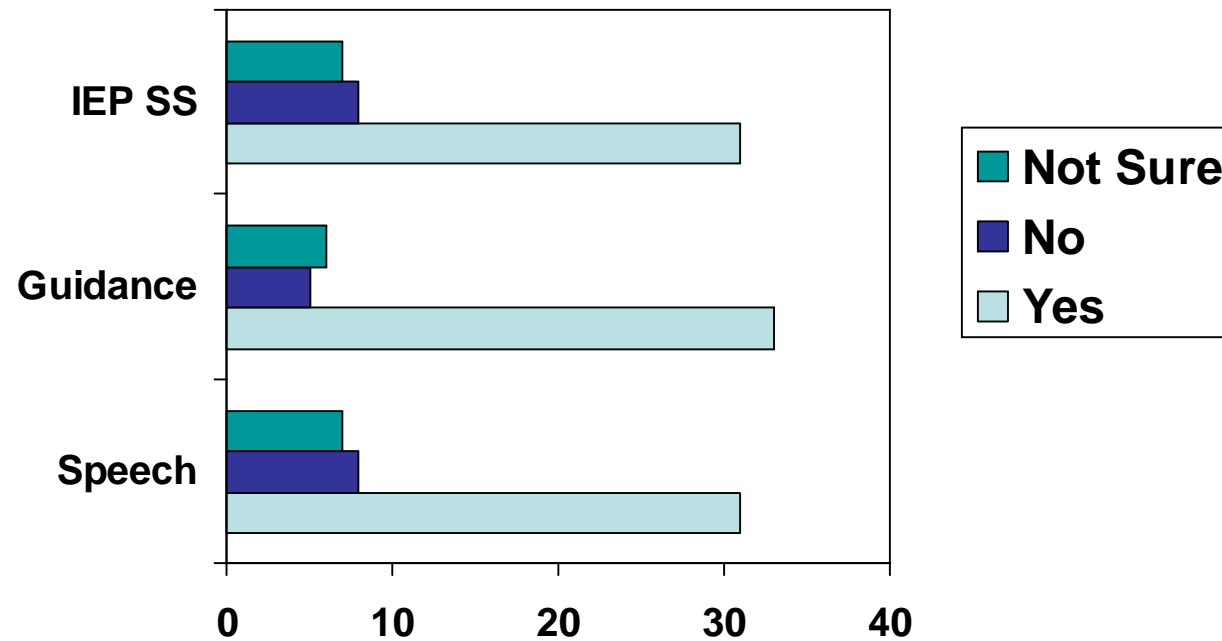


2nd Step

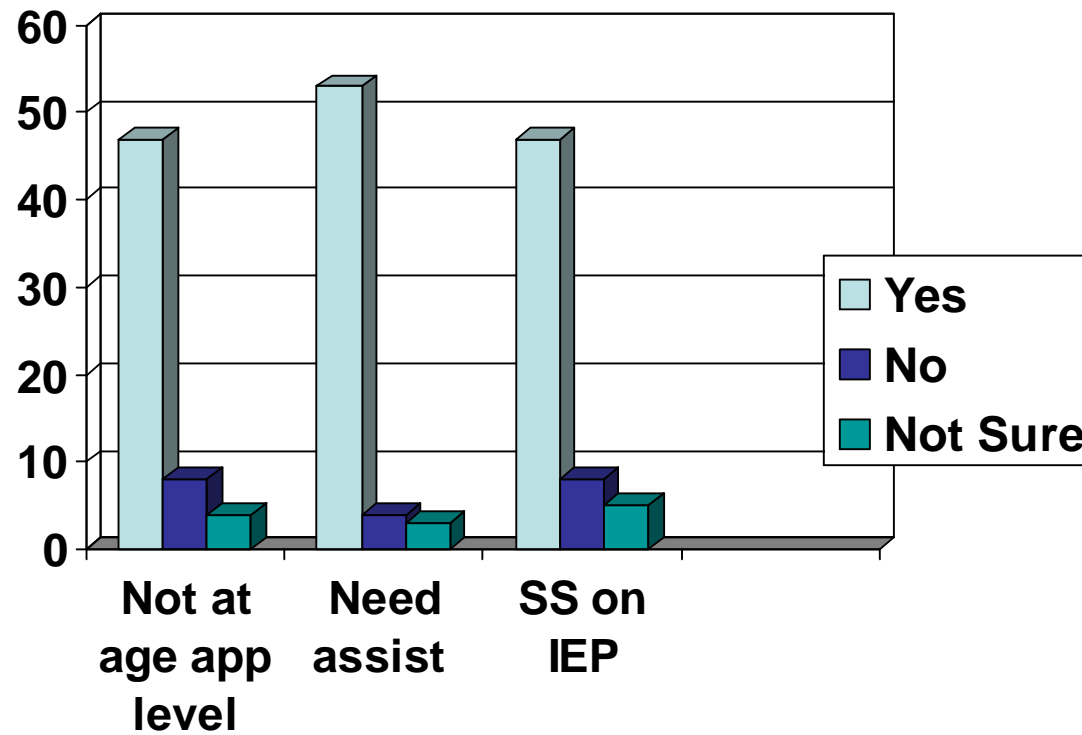


Total Responses = 44

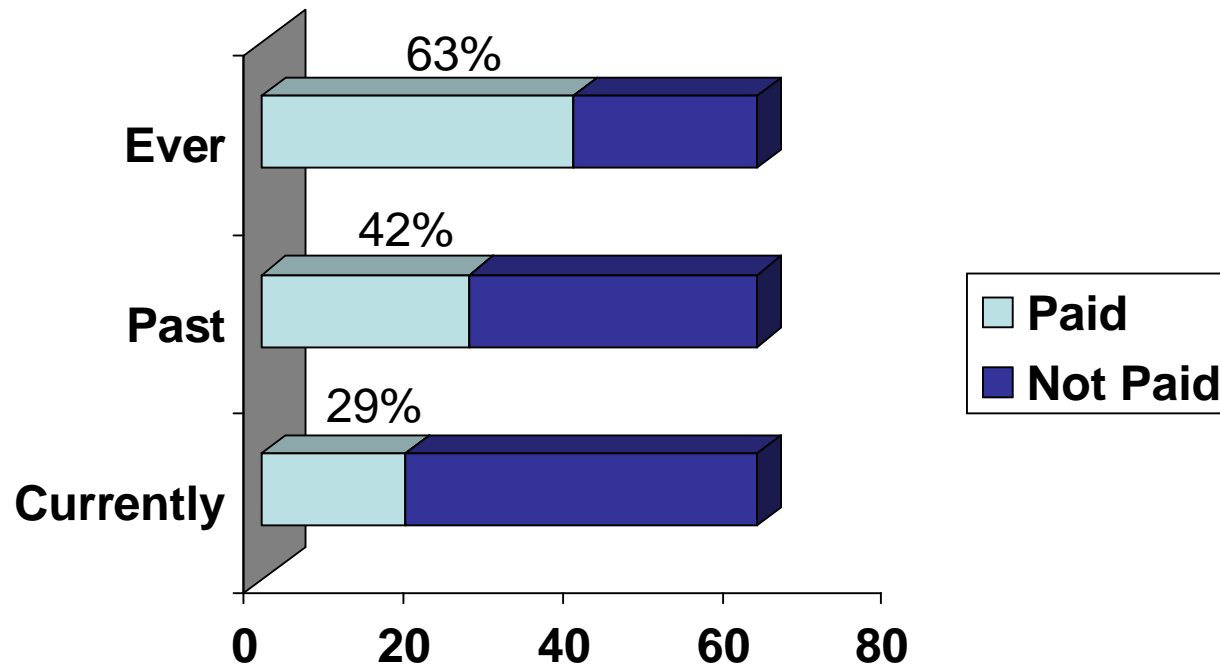
Social Skill Instruction from School Speech & Language Therapist



Child's Social Skills Status

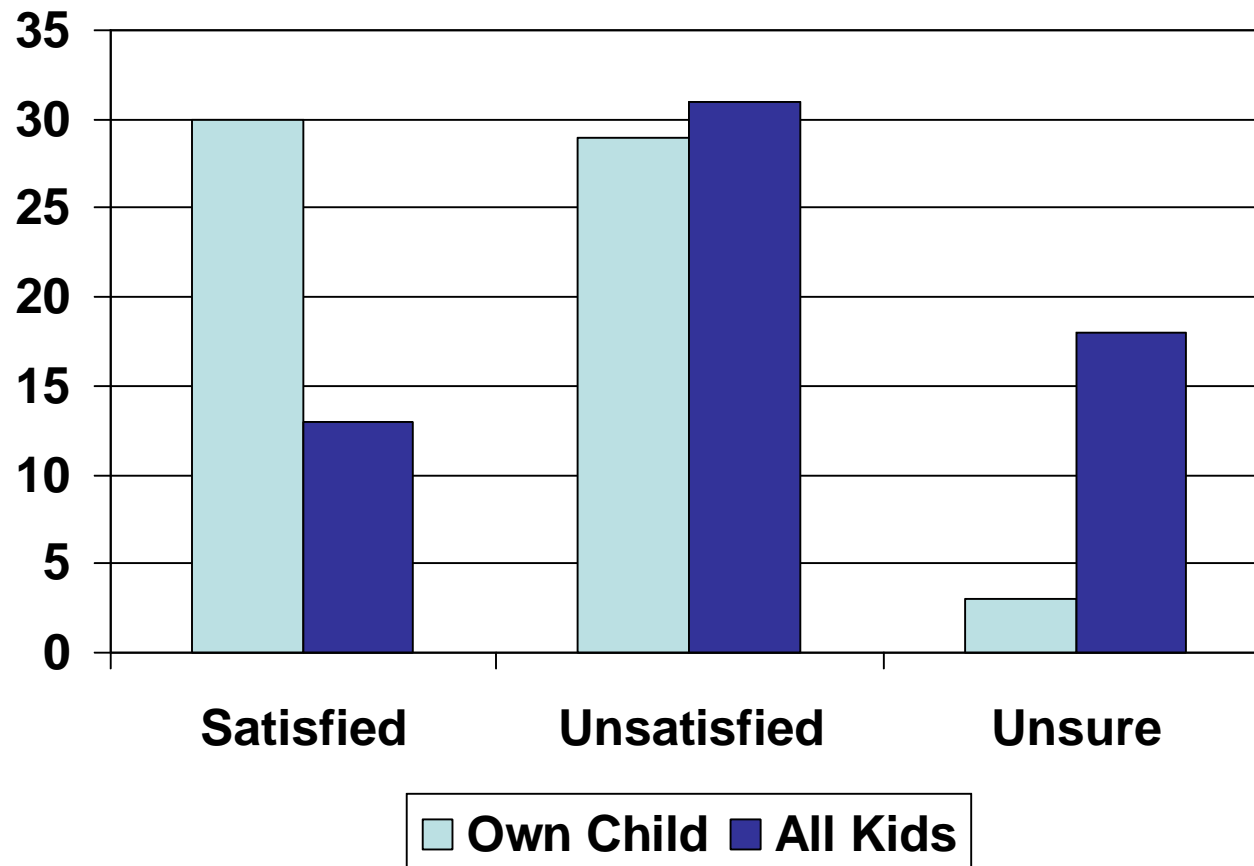


Private Social Skills



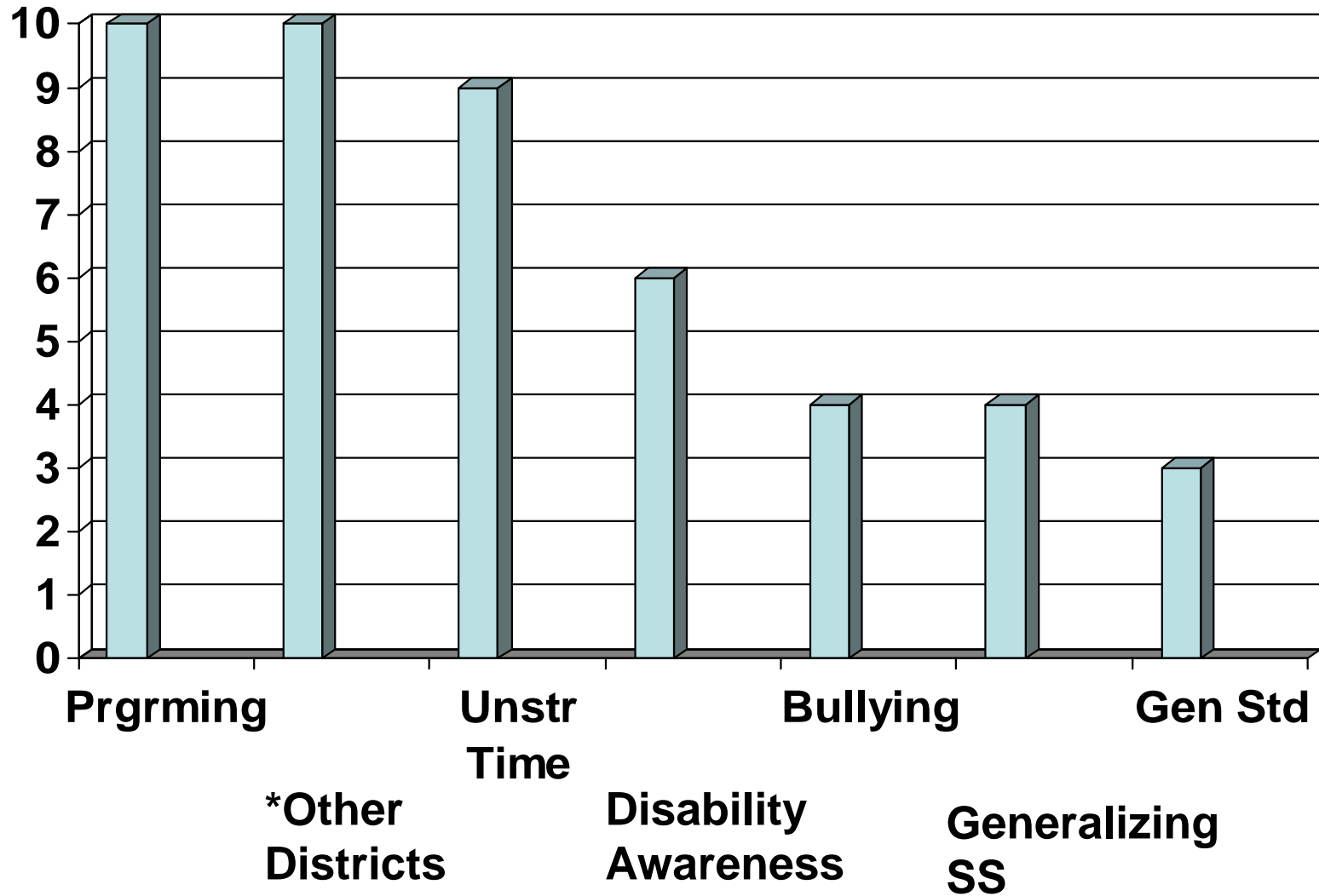
Note: Respondents may have paid for services in the past and currently.

Satisfaction with Social Skill Programming and Initiatives



Note: Own child question responses = 62. All kids question responses = 55.

Comment Categories



*Number of mentions: Newton 6, Medfield 1, Westwood 1, South Shore Quincy or Milton 1, Winchester 1; 2 compliments for Needham

Recommendations

- Disability Awareness Training for all students in Needham
 - Elementary SPED Dir. Mary Lammi heading team
- Social Skills Training for all staff / aids / teacher who monitor recess
 - Possible NEF grant to fund training
- Teacher/specialist monitoring of recess
- Play Connection sponsored by schools
 - Similar to middle school Best Buddies program
- District review of programming (using federal stimulus money) should include review of social/emotional programming
- SEPAC should present survey results to members
 - Possibly at Jan SEPAC meeting where Disability Awareness presented

Appendix A

Parent Comments by Topic

Comments: Programming Requests

- “I would like to see more *strength development* to augment some of the programs designed to address deficiencies. Especially as the youngsters enter middle school, they need to develop a positive identity with areas they both enjoy and can possibly excel.”
- “My 3 kids are new to Needham. My Pollard student and my elementary student have had the opportunity to connect . . . My high school student is in classes where my child does not know others well. I highly recommend *more ice-breaking/relationship building activities in each high school class* at the beginning of the school year.”
- “It is unfortunate that the EASE social games program is after school and at cost to parents whose children are on IEPs. More opportunities at least a few times a week to reinforce the lessons would be very helpful.”
- “My child, at age 13, has heard all the social skills words like expected and unexpected and all the other lingo a million times. I think he needs a conversation class where he has to make conversation about things that don’t necessarily interest him, and learn to keep it going. But he is very resistant. Very dynamic teachers are needed for this age where the kids can get very cynical.”

Comments: Programming Requests (continued)

- “. . . would like to see more social skills development particularly at the middle and high school levels where the skills are greatly needed as peers become more important.”
- “If teachers are using the Second Step program, Disability Awareness and Anti-Bullying in the classroom, they should send home directions to parents who reinforce the learning at home.”
- “Better summer programs.”
- “A therapist trained in social skills should be the person running groups.”
- “I would like to see a person in charge of coordinating social skills programming for the district. Newton has had that.”
- “. . . At the High School when we investigated the programs offered they were all smoke and mirrors. They made it sound good, but it wasn't really there. . . For years, Needham has not been honest with families who are dealing with ASD. Social skill programming can be done and can be done well.”

Comments: Other District's Practices

- “I know that Newton is very strong in the area of social skills.”
- “My understanding is that Westwood has a Social Skills program worth looking at. I believe strongly that highly structured ABA-based social skills groups can benefit children who need it.”
- “I believe Newton has a fairly active and comprehensive social skills program.”
- “Medfield has an after-school, program as does Newton (I think). I'd like to see Needham consult with either Advances Learning Center or Confidence Connection to train teachers and offer a social skills program after school one day/week.”
- “Newton.”
- “Newton has more offerings in direct instruction (they have a new social pragmatic program but can't think of name – kidpower?) and in integrated opportunities for generalization. Their summer programs are integrated and more recreational. Needham's summer program is not good enough.
- “A South Shore school – was it Quincy or Milton – was doing quite a bit.”
- “Newton has better SS programming such as after school social groups and people dedicated to social skills.”
- “. . . We've heard Winchester has been committed to doing it (SS programming) well. . . . Needham does not have the programs that other schools and Towns have.”

Comments: Unstructured Times

- “Would like to see more formal, structured and frequent programs in place during unstructured times, lunch, recess, etc.”
- “I think more assistance could be used during the recess time.”
- “I’d like to see more facilitated play at recess and more help getting play dates at the weekend.”
- “Supervision and direct instruction on the playground and other unstructured settings.”
- “I have been thinking about trying to find a social skills program that trains our playground monitors and then requesting funding from the Needham Education Foundation (NEF) to implement it. This would address social skills, anti-bullying, etc. Not sure exactly where to start but thought of Ann E. Densmore who is based in Lexington, I believe, and is an expert on social skills.”
- “Assist children more during “off” time such as recess, lunch, PE, and art. Have more after school classes that teach specific social skills to children.”
- “. . . I would like to see teachers and specialists go out to recess to support our kids – not just office staff.”
- “(need more instruction) particularly in non-structured settings.”
- “. . . Skill development for recess is critical to success of child.”

Comments: Disability Awareness

- “The Disability Awareness programs have made an incredibly wonderful impression on my daughter”
- “I don’t believe all children on IEPs get the same amount of support that my child receives, although they each deserve it. Some schools do disability training better than others.”
- “. . . Would love to have more social skills groups available and also address the general school population with sensitivity training.”
- “. . . I would like to see better disability awareness and teaching of inclusion through planned meeting on part of teachers, staff and principal, etc. and disability awareness at every school not just Eliot and Hillside.”
- “More disability awareness.”
- “. . . more “hidden disability” awareness (for the general school population) taught, with the goal of increasing tolerance / patience / acceptance of children who interact differently.”

Comments: Bullying

- “(training to prevent) Cyber bullying needs to be started at an earlier age.”
- “Needham has learned nothing from the suicides. The administration says the right things, but nothing has changed. Bullying is extremely common. Pollard was a nightmare. It was a very dangerous place for our child . . . The teachers didn’t intervene and when we called they said “It’s not our job to make friends for you child.””
- “More anti-bullying training; teaching regular ed students about disabilities and how they affect life.”
- “(anti) bullying (training) . . . is critical to success of child.”

Comments: Generalizing Social Skills

- “. . . I would like to see NPS have a generalization plan for kids who need it.”
- “. . . in general, aides, TAs, teachers need to be TAUGHT how to help kids generalize the social skills they work so hard to learn in a small, therapeutic setting in a more natural setting”
- “I’d like to see social skills facilitated using realistic kid language, not artificial politically correct speak (responsive classroom). Our kids don’t always realize that classroom language (everyone is “friend” behavior is unexpected” not bad) should not be used in front of peers outside of the classroom.”
- “Our kids need more frequent small group or personalized instruction with non-SPED kids.”

Comments: General Student Population

- “I want to be specific in saying I think it’s appropriate for the general population.”
- “Our kids are going to get rejected by the reg ed kids and we need to find a way to make them okay about this. My child seeks out his peers. They reject him and then he asks me why he should bother? Their negative reinforcement has increased his inappropriate social behavior.”
- “I think it would be great if there were more structured, interactive classroom-wide programs, so that the kids could practice skills on a regular basis in the regular setting.”

Comments: Compliments

- “I have so far been favorably impressed by what Needham is doing.”
- “No knowledge of other programs and no suggestions for Needham, generally believe Needham doing a good job”

Appendix B

Middle School and High School Data and Parent Comments