



Our **vision** is to provide high-quality educational opportunities that inspire a community of learners

WELLNESS • EQUITY • ENGAGEMENT

Our **mission** is to develop engaged, well-balanced learners through collaborative, caring relationships

## Special Education Update

Jennifer Truslow, Director of Special Education  
Oct. 6, 2022

## Overview of Presentation

Important laws/terms

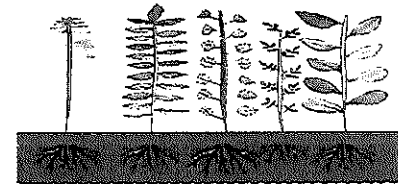
District programming

Status of co-teaching

Disproportionality

Budget information

Special Education reviews



## Laws/Regulations

### Federal

- IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)
  - Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)
  - Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

### Massachusetts

- MGL Chapter 71 Section B (known as Ch. 766)
- 603 CMR 28.0 Special Education Laws and Regulations

## Services for youngest learners

### Carol Huebner Early Childhood Program

- Districts are required to provide services for students with disabilities starting at age 3
- Serving over 100 students aged 3-5 at this time
  - Inclusive classrooms as well as a program for students with autism that require ABA methodology
  - Some students receive related services only
  - Students join throughout the year
- Relationships with families and early intervention providers
- Current trends: more complex needs, students with very limited social experiences

## What does least restrictive mean in AB?

Least Restrictive

Most Restrictive



Learning  
Center

Co-Teaching

Specialized  
Programs

Out of  
District

## Special Education K-12+

Least restrictive:

- **Learning Centers and related services**
  - In class and pull out supports, all grades, all schools
  - Services include academic instruction, Speech/Language, OT, PT, Vision, BCBA consultation- all based students' IEPs
  - **Majority of students on IEPs receive their services via this model**
  
- **Co-teaching: Continuing to build**
  - Elementary: 3/6 schools, ELA, Reading, Math
  - RJG: 2 sections of ELA, 2 Sections of Math
  - ABRHS: 11 special ed teachers are co-teaching in one content area (English, Algebra, Biology, World History)

## Specialized Programs

### Language and Beyond (LAB)

- Students with language-based learning disabilities
- Small group instruction in reading, language arts, math
- Speech and Language services
- Executive Functioning/Work production (secondary)
- K-12 program supporting 30 students

### Connections (formerly Bridges at ABRHS)

- Students on the autism spectrum, requiring academic, social pragmatics, EF and behavioral support
- Full/partial inclusion depending on student need
- K-12 program serving 77 students

## Specialized Programs continued...

### Compass

- Students with emotional impairments
- Services include academic support, counseling, pragmatics and behavioral regulation
- K-12 program supporting 48 students

### Pathways

- Students on the autism spectrum, require significant academic modifications and behavioral support
- Substantially separate for some with inclusion opportunities, increased inclusion as independence increases
- K-6, 24 students currently at Blanchard, expanding to RJGJHS next year

## Specialized Programs continued..

### **STEP (Secondary Transition Education Program)**

- At RJGJHS, serving small group of students with intellectual impairments
- Small group instruction and inclusive opportunities
- Academics, life skills and community-based learning

### **ODP (Occupational Development Program)**

- At ABRHS; students with moderate to intensive needs
- Small group instruction as well as inclusion classes

### **PACE (Practical Academics and Community Education)**

- Program for students aged 18-22
- Vocational experiences, job coaching, life skills

## Why are some students placed in programs out of the district?

- Some students require highly specialized services as a result of their disabilities that the district is not able to provide
- We work with student and family to identify an appropriate school setting
- Out of District Coordinator maintains a close relationship with the student, family and the receiving school to ensure the student's success
- District provides transportation
- 73 students currently placed out of district
- Collaboratives, day schools and residential placements

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## Disproportionality

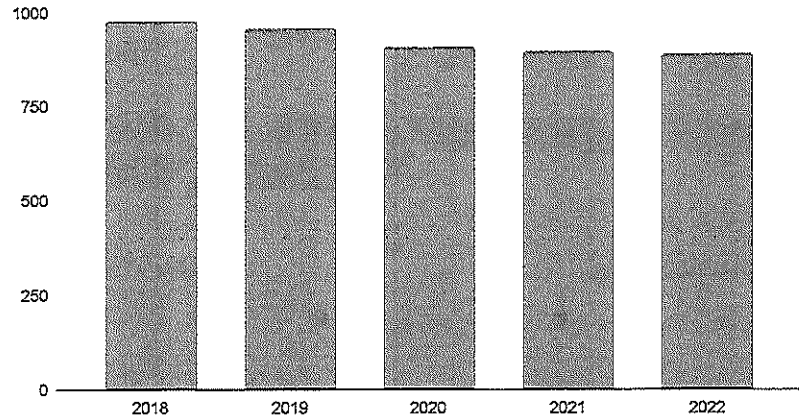
### Over-identification of African American/Black students with a communication disability

- Although improving, over 3% of African American/Black students were identified, compared to 1.1% of white students during 18-19, 19-20 and 20-21 school years
- Data dive/root cause analysis revealed
  - Inconsistent capacity (beliefs, skills, tools, practices) for general educators to support all students in their classrooms
  - Gaps in evidence-based literacy materials/practices
  - Lack of consistent MTSS with tiered interventions

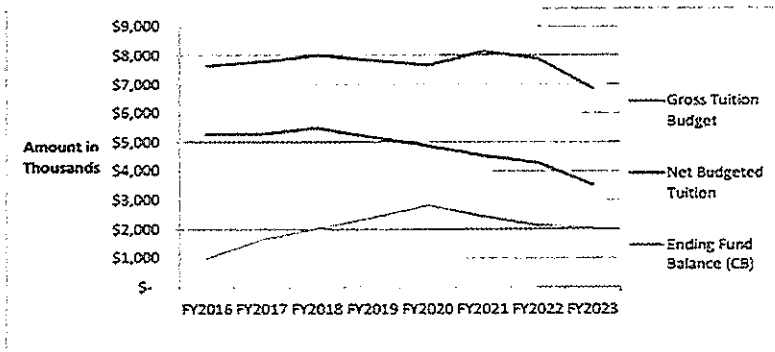
### Action plan for this school year

- Elementary MTSS roll out
- Responsive Classroom Training
- Jessica Minihan work with ISTs
- Literacy work around vocabulary and comprehension

### K-12 Students on IEPs (source: PowerSchool)



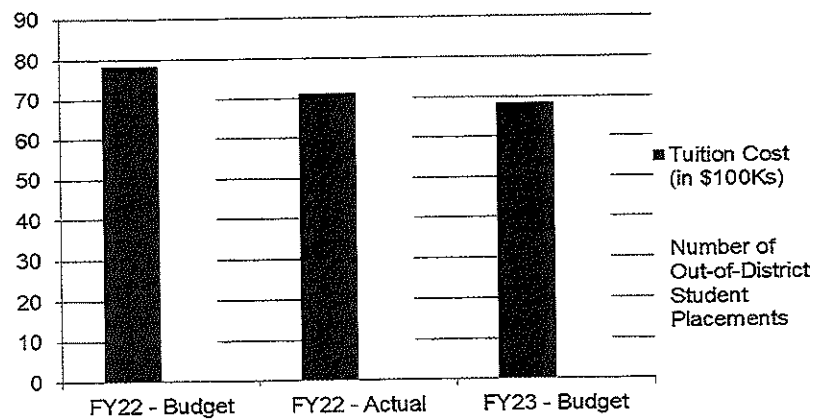
### Trends: Tuition Costs and Circuit Breaker Reserve



In FY23, budgeted use of CB is \$3,305K, which equals CB received in FY22; by law, all CB reimbursements must be spent within one FY.



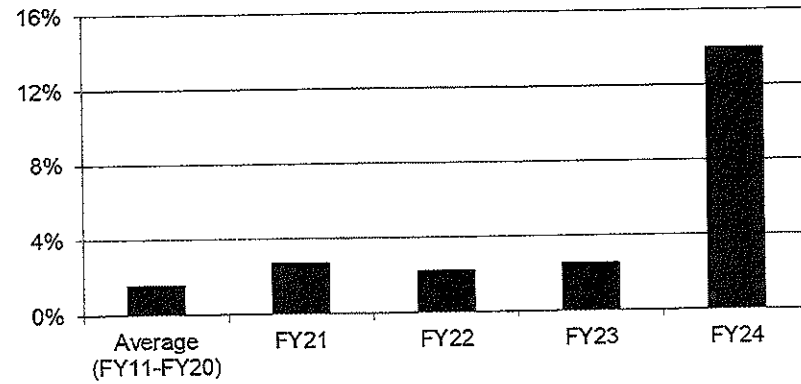
### Out-of-District Comparison – Tuition Cost and Students Placed



### Trends: Tuition Rate Increases

Annual OSD-Approved Rate Increase (%)

(source = MASBO)



The TOTAL approved increase between FY11-FY20 was 14.11%  
Unlike FB (inflation capped at 4.5%), no statutory cap for private rates

## Special Education Reviews

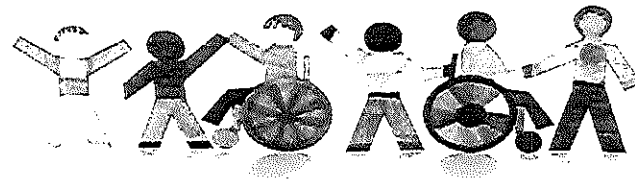
### Review of SE Admin Structure/Use of SE assistants

- Individual and group interviews in October
- Administrators, Principals, APs, Special Ed Coordinators, Special Ed and Gen Ed Teachers, Special Ed assistants
- Building tours
- Also looking at the use of Special Education Assistants

### Tiered Focused Monitoring

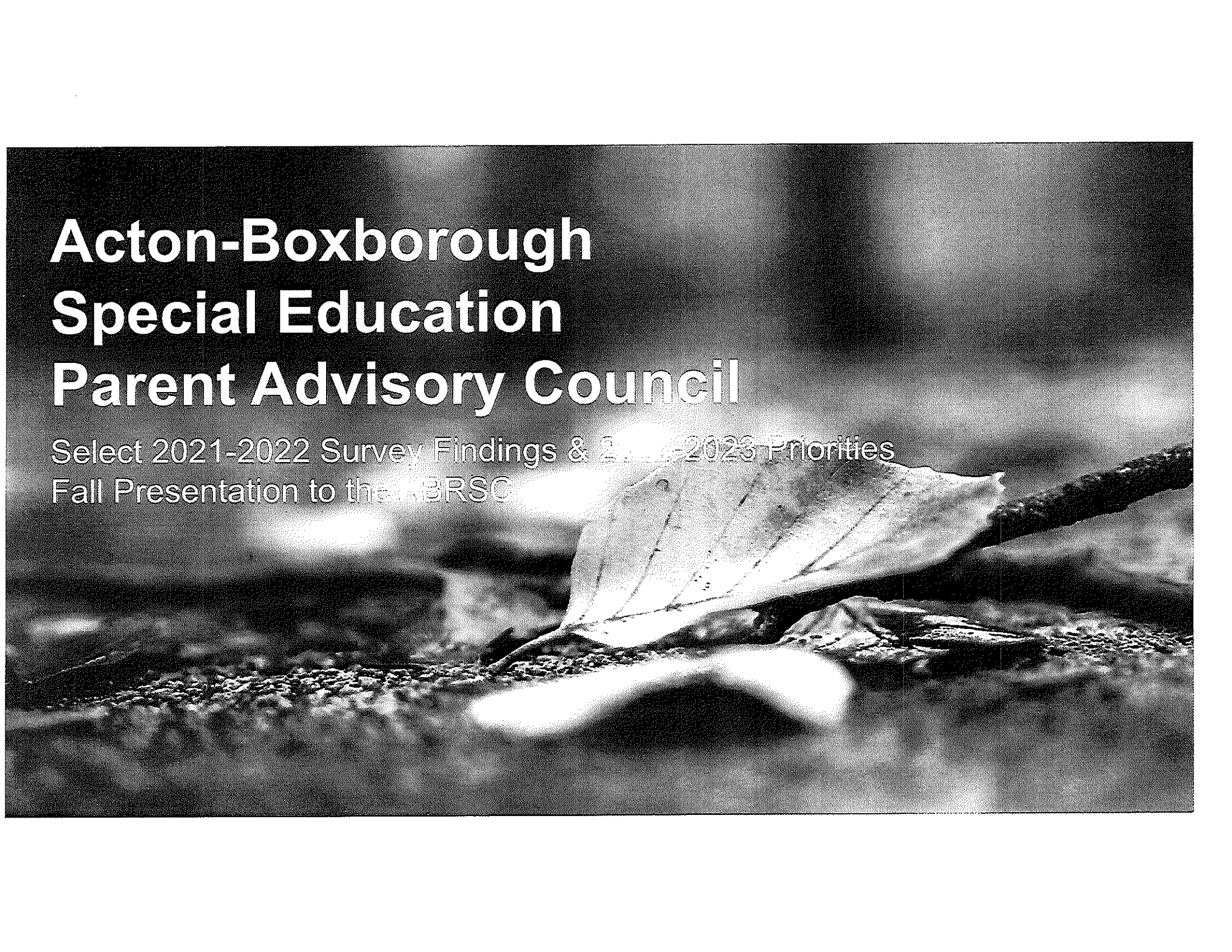
- DESE team on site December 7-8, 2022
- Record reviews, interviews, building visits
- Special Ed Parent survey/SEPAC interview

## Collaboration with SEPAC



# Questions?

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# Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Select 2021-2022 Survey Findings & 2022-2023 Priorities  
Fall Presentation to the BRSC

## Our Mission

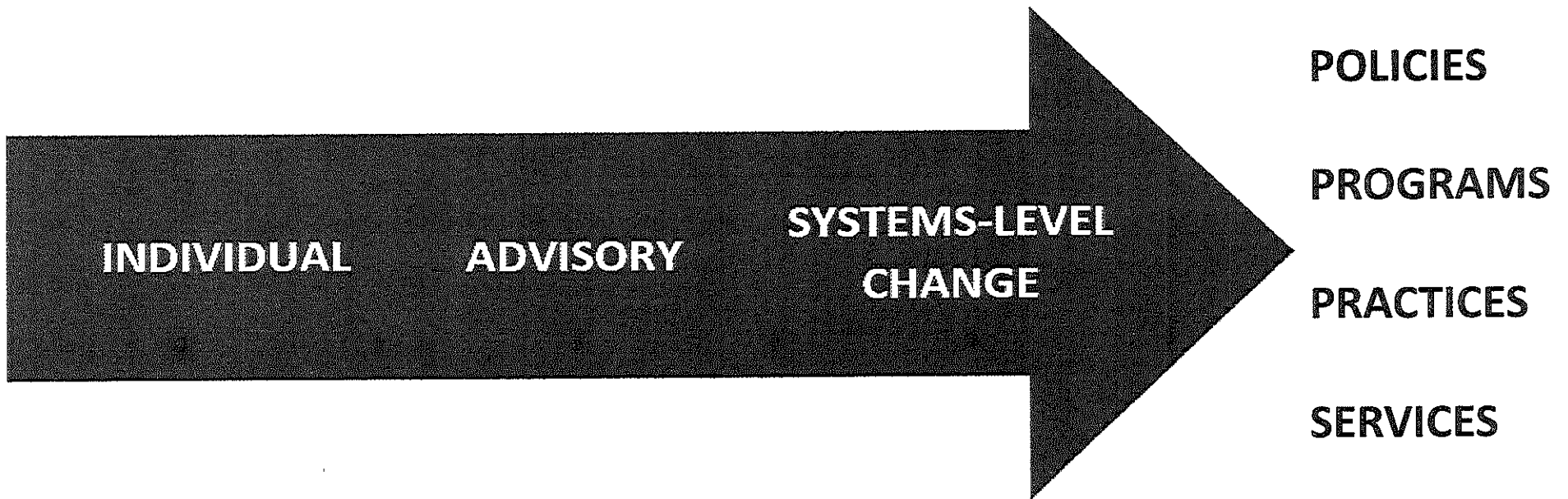
**To ensure understanding, respect, support,  
and the appropriate education of all children  
in our community.**

The Special Education Parent Advisory Council's  
duties under state law include:

*“advising the district on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities and meeting regularly with school officials to participate in the planning, development and evaluation of the school district’s special education programs.”*

# The SEPAC's Role

Acton-Boxborough SEPAC  
2010-2011 Meeting #1



Content inspired by Family Voices, "Assessing Family Engagement in Systems-Level Initiatives"

## 2021-2022 Survey Objectives

**Goal 1:** Solicit information from our entire parent/guardian community to facilitate participation and ensure all children with disabilities are represented through our efforts

**Goal 2:** Monitor families' experiences with special education programming to provide feedback and guidance to the district

**Goal 3:** Follow up on issues previously identified through surveys, feedback forms, and anecdotal reporting

## Demographics

- 209 responses
- 183 students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) / Students With Disabilities (SWD)
  - 24% of 762 October 1, 2021, headcount per DESE
- 26 students with 504 Plans
- First time translating survey into languages other than English
  - Chinese, French, Portuguese (missing Korean & Spanish)
  - 3 of 13 surveys returned



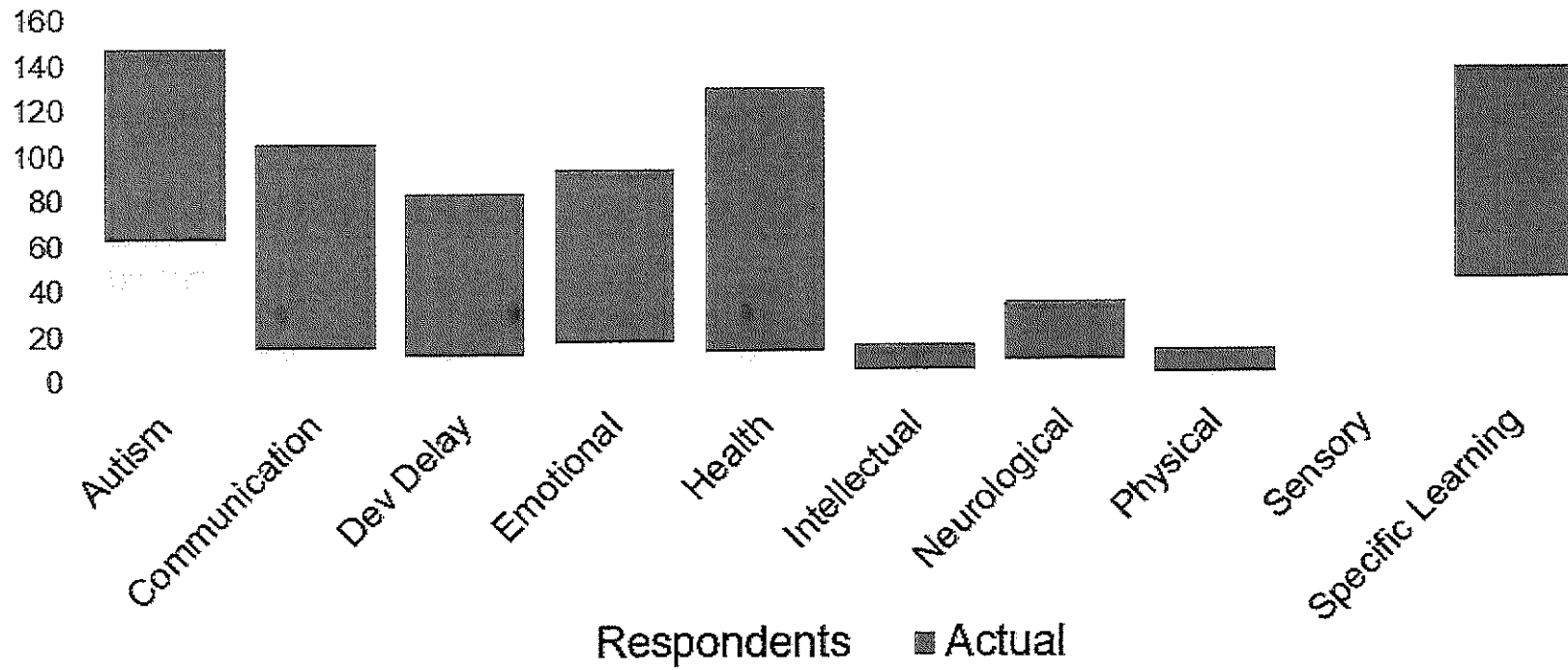
## Demographics Continued

- First time collecting race/ethnicity data per DESE definitions
- Survey results (IEPs + 504s) of total SWD based on 810 headcount
  - African American 9.3% (5 of 54)
  - Asian 25.4% (31 of 122)
  - Hispanic 11.7% (7 of 60)
  - Native American 0% (0 of 3)
  - Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander 0% (0 of 3)
  - Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic 21.6% (11 of 51)
  - White 28.8% (149 of 517)

### Survey Responses to Total SWD by IEP Disability Type

N=183

\*504s removed



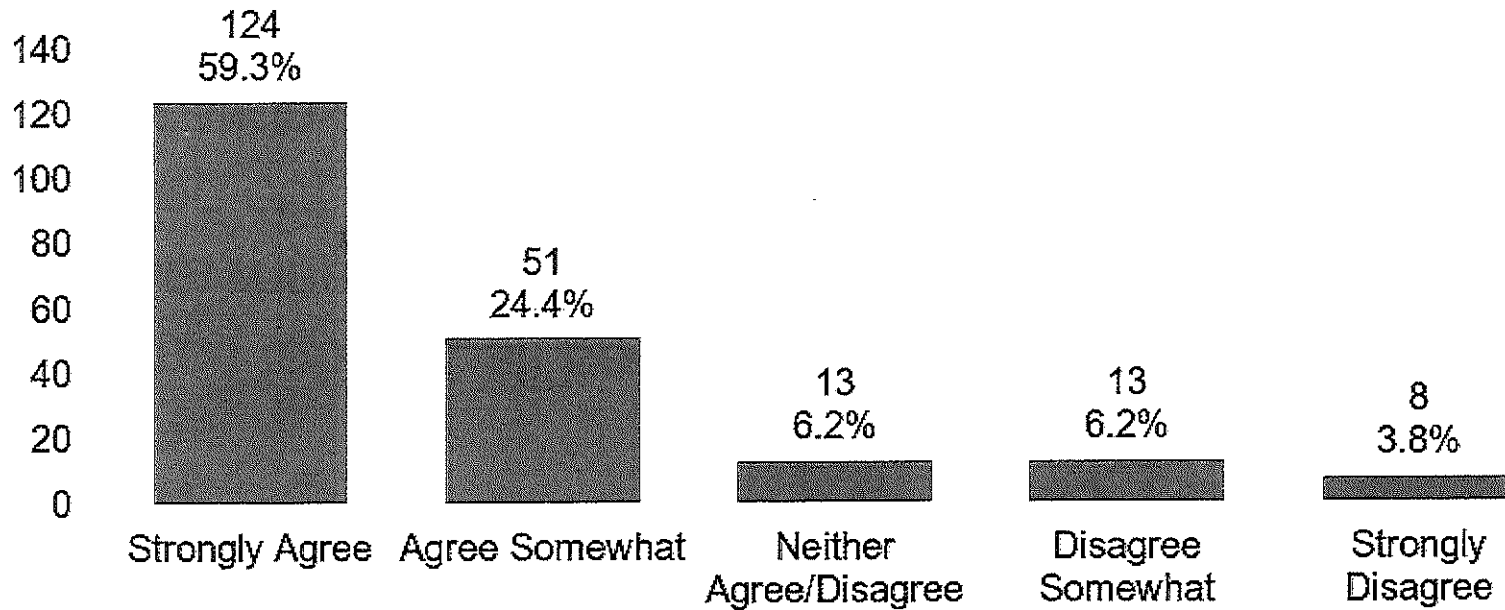
## Outreach

- Resource table at all back to school nights and Early Childhood Program meetup
- Reached out to all Special Ed Coordinators to (re)introduce organization and extend partnership opportunities
- Hosted Special Ed Coordinators and OT/PT Chair at September business meeting
- Available to present to PTOs
- Met with new Director of DEI to discuss 504s, translation, inclusion, and other issues related to students with disabilities

# Collaboration

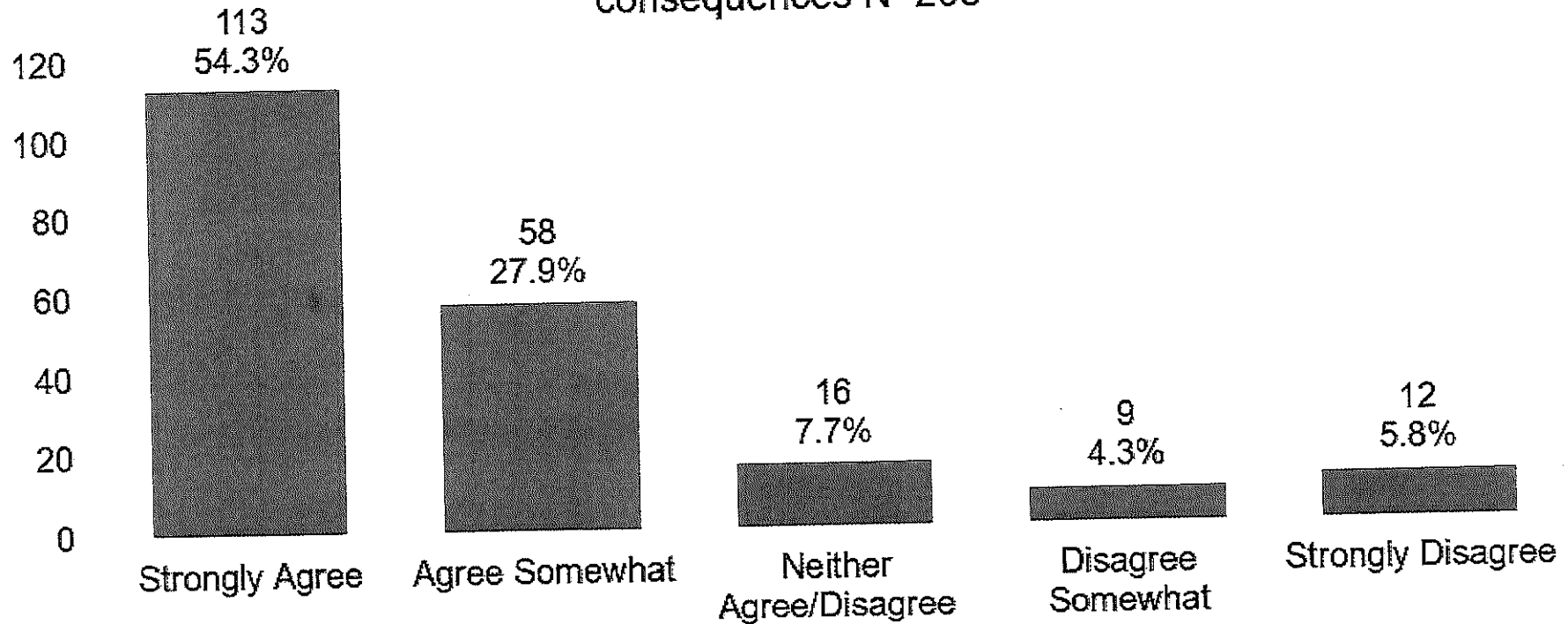
Q5: My observations and suggestions about my student's special education program, accommodations, or services are given consideration as a full member by the rest of the IEP team / For a student with a 504, my input is given consideration by school staff

N=209



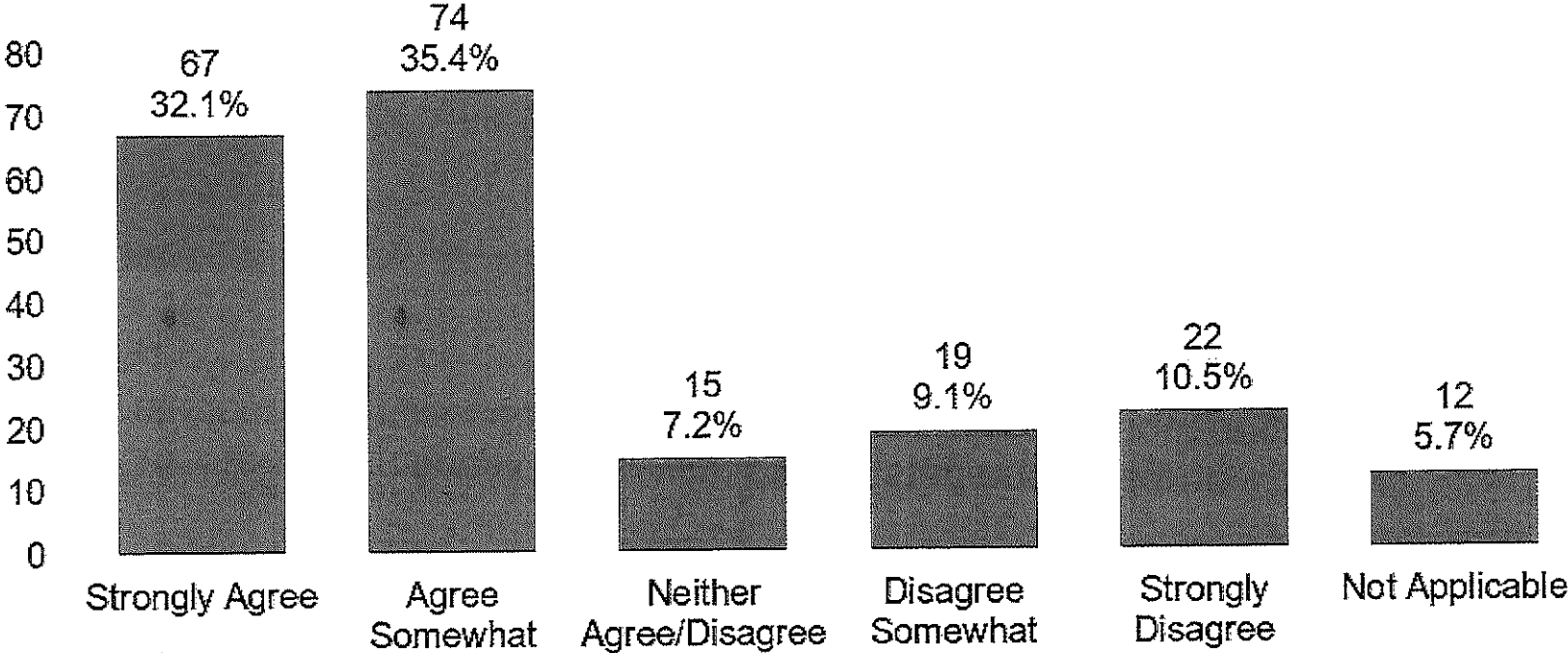
# Culture

Q6: I feel I can speak freely with district staff and disagree with my student's special education program or services without negative consequences N=208



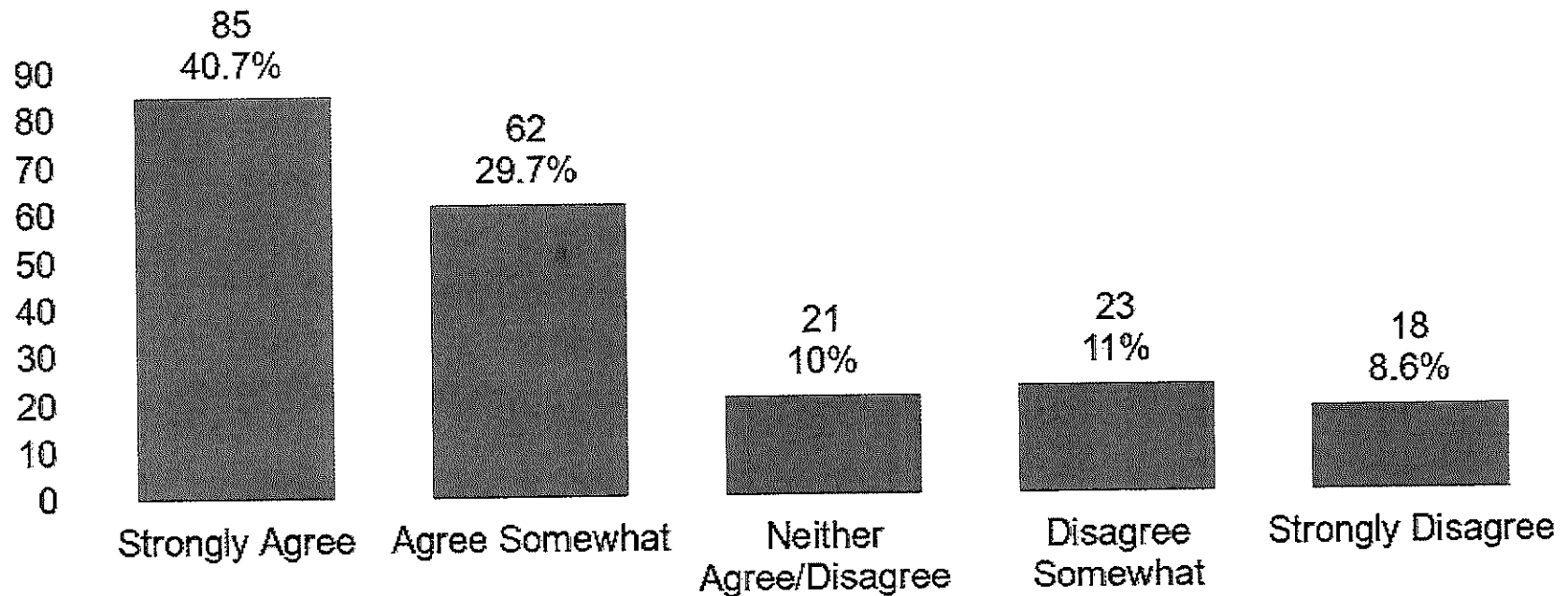
# Staff Understanding

Q11: I feel as though general education staff understand my student's disability-related needs N=209



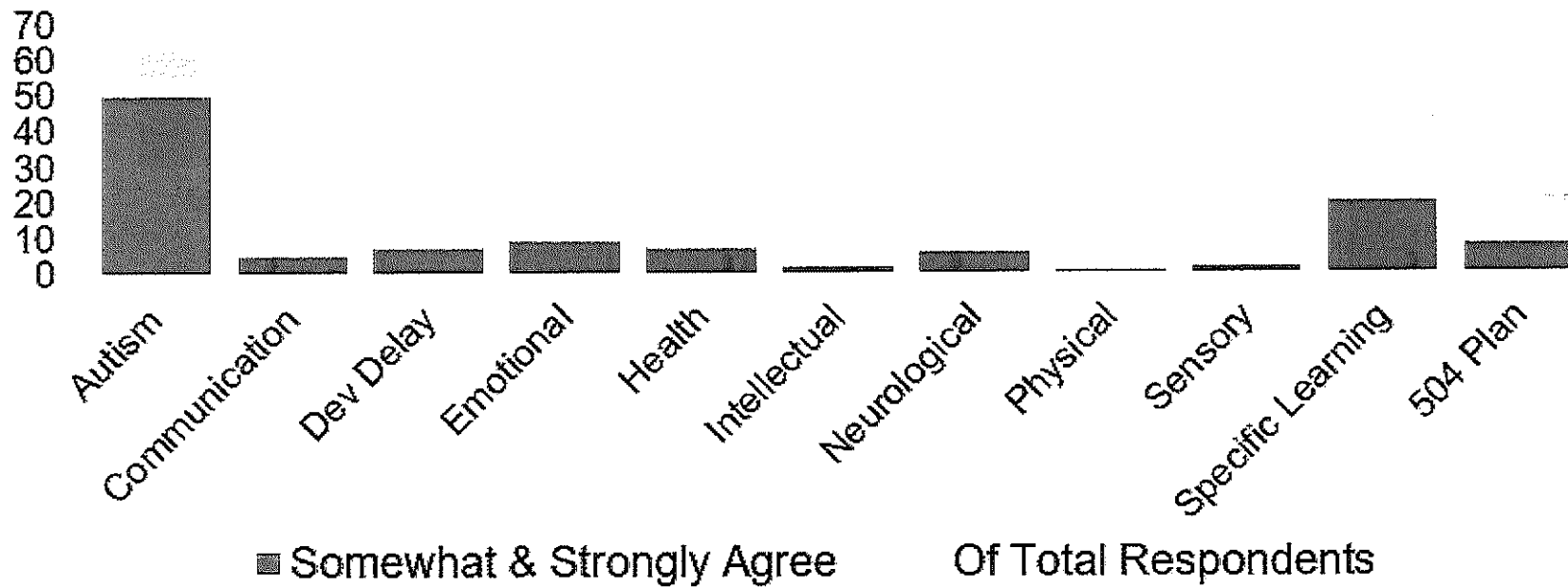
# Social Emotional Needs

Q9: My student has the appropriate support, peer groupings, and/or services necessary to meet their social and emotional needs N=209



# Bullying, Teasing & Harassment

Q10: I worry about my student being bullied, teased, or harassed due to their disability N=208  
*Somewhat & Strongly Agree by Disability Type*

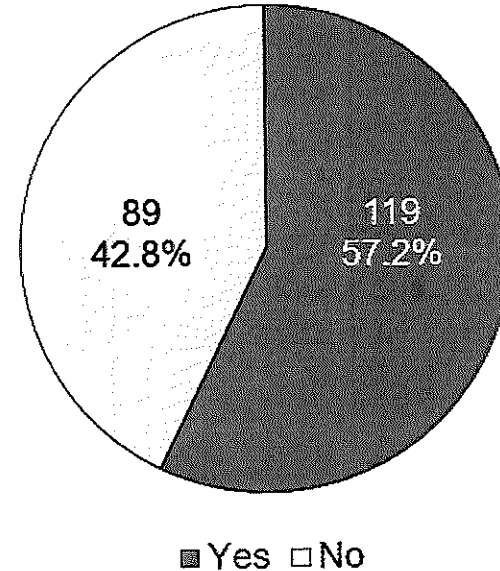




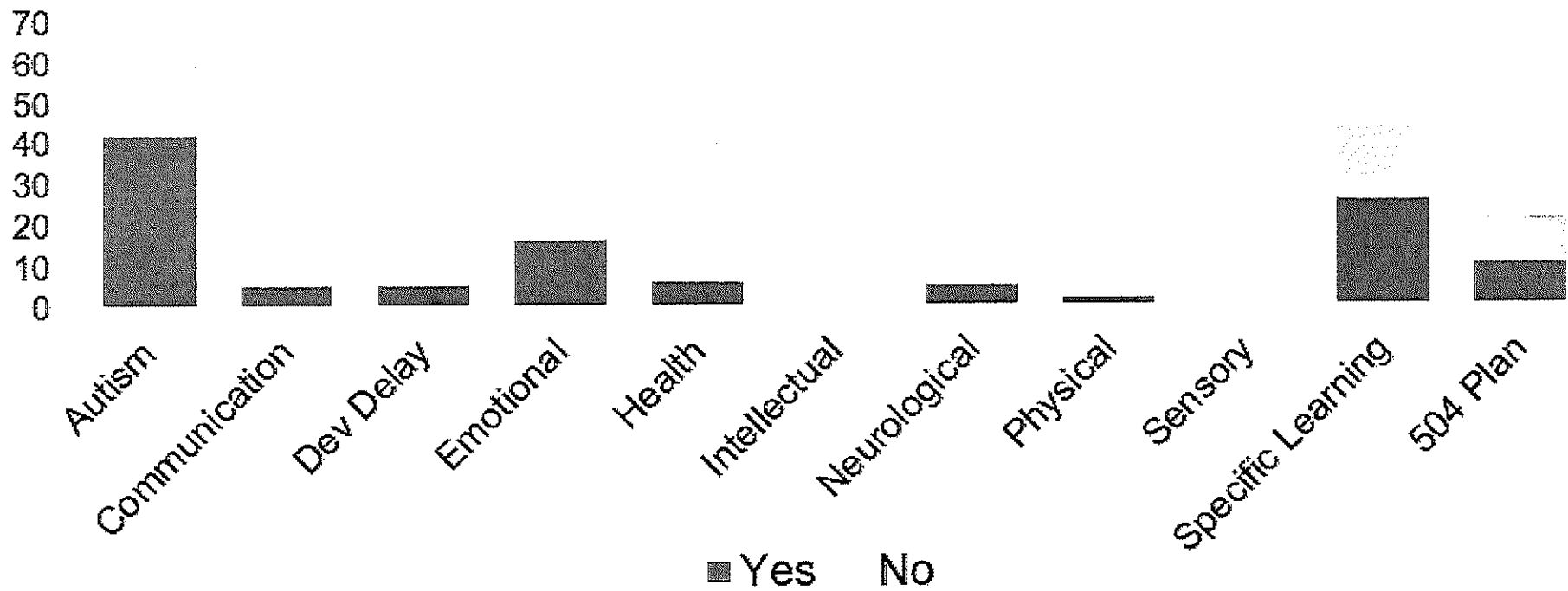
# Private Therapies

- Many families report pursuing outside services in addition to what their students receive in school
- Over half report supplementing
- Discrepancies by disability type
- Questions regarding equity, adequate in-school service provision, and progress monitoring

Q14: I supplement my student's special education services or 504 support with private therapy for their disability-related needs N=208

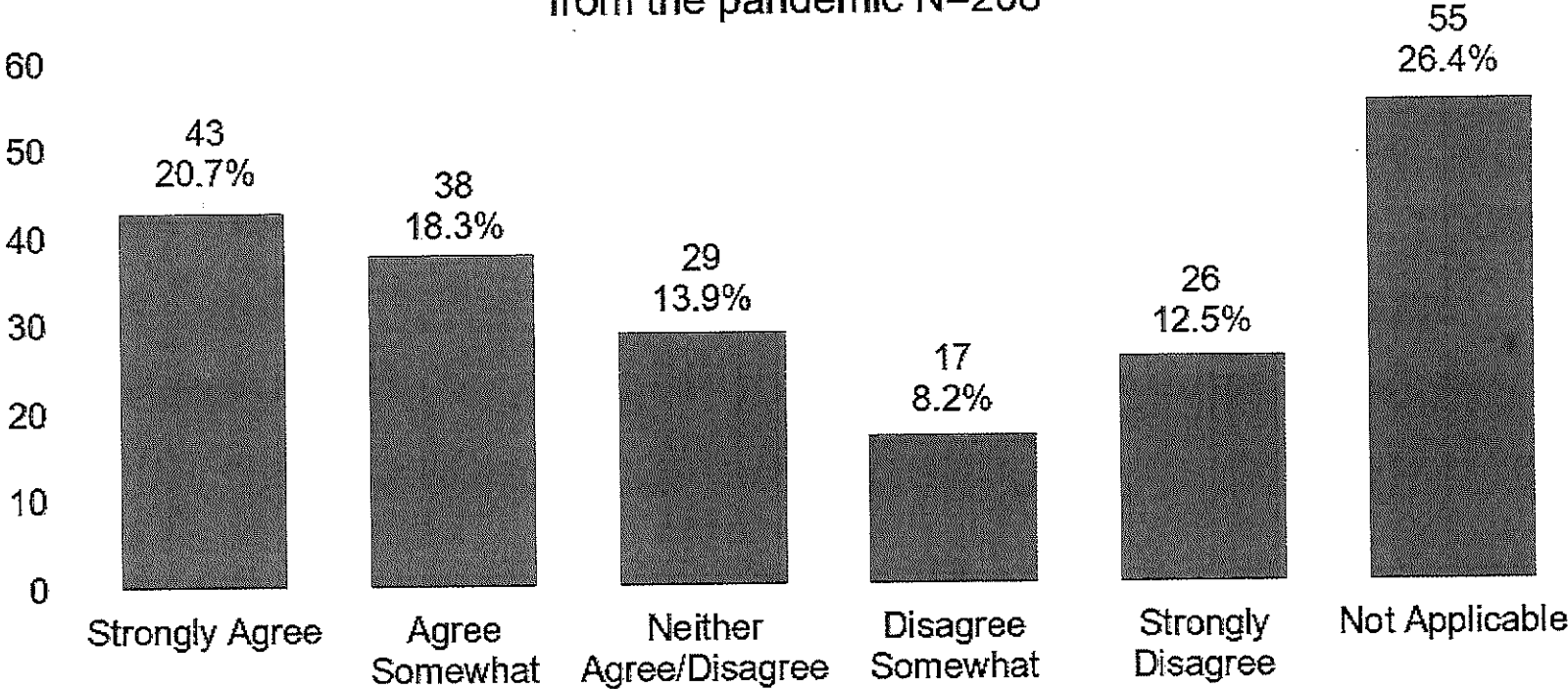


### Q14 Private Therapy by Disability Type N=208



# COVID's Impact

Q13: My student was provided the appropriate level of COVID Compensatory Services to address any regression or new needs from the pandemic N=208



## 2022-2023 Preliminary Priorities

- Monitor district conversations regarding Memorandum of Understanding for the School Resource Officer program
- Participate in DESE Tiered Focus Monitoring process
- Follow up on issues identified in 2021-2022 survey: Extended School Year eligibility process, PowerSchool access, SEPAC outreach, community building, etc.
- Listening session for parents/guardians of students with Autism
- Spring 2023 parent/guardian survey
- Community education on Basic Rights and other topics

## Meeting Dates & Resources

October 19 (Zoom)

November 16 (Zoom)

December 14 (RJ Grey library)

January 11 (Zoom)

February 15 (Zoom)

March 15 (RJ Grey library)

April 12 (Zoom)

May 17 (Zoom)

June 14 Annual Meeting & Elections (RJ Grey library)

Federation for Children with Special Needs  
[fcsn.org](http://fcsn.org)

Mass Advocates for Children  
[massadvocates.org](http://massadvocates.org)

Special Needs Advocacy Network  
[spanmass.org](http://spanmass.org)

## Thanks & Contact Information

Our thanks to  
Director of Special Education Jennifer Truslow,  
Director of DEI Jennifer Faber,  
Superintendent Peter Light,  
and the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee  
for their ongoing collaboration and support

[absepac.org](http://absepac.org)

 [@absepac](https://www.facebook.com/absepac)

[abrsdsepac@gmail.com](mailto:abrsdsepac@gmail.com)



Our vision is to provide high-quality educational opportunities that inspire a community of learners

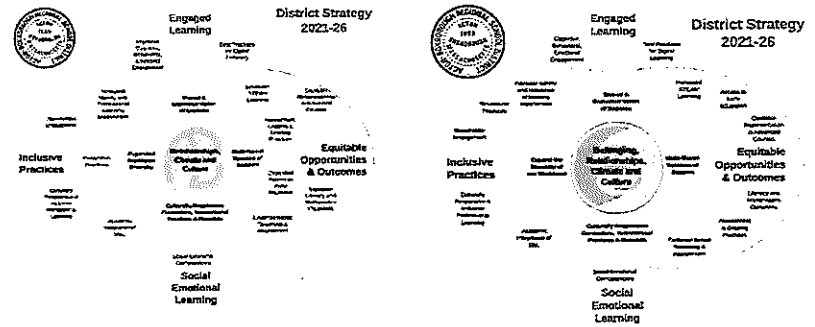
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# District and Superintendent's Goals 2022-23

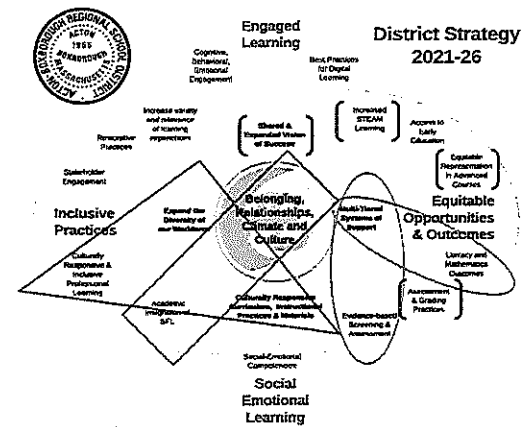
Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee  
October 6, 2022

## District Strategy



### 2022-23

- 3 District Goals
- 3 Additional Priorities (just below goals in order of significance)
- Continuation of prior work aligned with District Strategy
- Begin gradual shift to **outcome-oriented** (vs. output-oriented) goals
- 3 Overarching areas
  - ◆ SEL/ Mental and Behavioral Health
  - ◆ Multi-Tiered Systems of Support to improve Literacy/Math outcomes
  - ◆ Culturally Responsive Practices





## Goal #1

**Goal:** Improve **social-emotional and mental and behavioral health** outcomes for students by shifting our environments, practices and supports so that students can more effectively access learning and cultivate constructive relationships.

**Outcomes:**

- Creation of a long-term and short-term strategic plan for systemic implementation of social emotional learning and mental and behavioral health supports within the MTSS framework
- Identify a shared understanding and definition of social-emotional learning and the overarching framework from which to identify target skills and developmental trajectories across the grades
- Build capacity of educators and building staff to respond to social-emotional and mental and behavioral health concerns through a series of professional learning and consultation opportunities for educators, administrators, and district mental health providers
- Increase access points for targeted mental health intervention for students in grades 5-12 through community partnerships and telehealth opportunities

## Goal #2

**Goal:** Increase the number of students on a pathway to proficiency in Literacy and Mathematics through implementation of a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS).

**Outcome:** Increased number of students meeting their stretch goals (from baseline 2021-22), with particular emphasis on students performing one or more grade levels below benchmark on their baseline (Fall) assessment.

2021-22 Grades 1-3 % Students Meeting Annual "Stretch Growth" Goals by baseline (Fall) placement								
Grade 1			Grade 2			Grade 3		
Baseline Placement	% Met	Students Assessed	Baseline Placement	% Met	Students Assessed	Baseline Placement	% Met	Students Assessed
Mid or Above Grade Level	51%	167	Mid or Above Grade Level	49%	106	Mid or Above Grade Level	35%	62
Early On Grade Level	43%	86	Early On Grade Level	45%	51	Early On Grade Level	44%	32
One Grade Level Below	61%	56	One Grade Level Below	50%	139	One Grade Level Below	41%	197
Two Grade Levels Below	44%	39	Two Grade Levels Below	21%	33	Two Grade Levels Below	18%	27
Three or More Grade Levels Below	5%	21	NA			NA		

ABRSD 7

## Goal #3

**Goal:** Improve students', staff, and families' sense of belonging by strengthening school culture and climate, diversifying the professional staff, and intentionally implementing culturally-responsive instructional practices and materials.

**Outcomes:**

- To improve students', families' and staff sense of belonging and engagement through:
- Continuation and expansion of existing DEI initiatives as noted above.
- Establishment of Culturally Responsive Teacher Leaders at each school.
- Comprehensive, district-wide survey of students, staff and families twice per to collect feedback about belonging and relationship, as well as school and district climate and culture.
- Coordinated professional learning opportunities for culturally responsive practices at each school.
- Explore the development of a community welcome center in partnership with community organizations.
- Continuation of DEI Family Advisory Committee

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ABRSD 8

## Other Initiatives & Planning

**Evaluate course levels at the high school**

Evaluate the appropriateness of the current course leveling structure at the high school, examine student course selection pattern and students' success current environments, and articulate a plan moving forward.

**STEAM visioning**

Engage students, educators, families, professionals and university partners in creating a Vision for STEAM education that capitalizes on prior work and continues to articulate a vision for STEAM engagement through grade 12.

**NEASC/ Portrait of a Graduate**

Use the STEAM Visioning process to launch a broader community-wide visioning process for the District to articulate a vision for a Portrait of a Graduate.

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## Superintendent's Goals

1. Student Learning → District Goal #2
2. District Goal #1
3. District Goal #3
4. Professional Practice →

**Goal:** Increase the number of ways in which we engage with families and our broader community to enlist and sustain support for the school District and to develop a broader community understanding of our goals

**Outcome:** I will engage with a broad range of stakeholders within the schools and broader community including boards and committees, senior citizens, different cultural groups and organizations, and parent organizations.

