

Andover Special Education Parent Advisory Council 2020-21 District Survey Results

SEPAC is open to all families with students that live in the District, regardless of school location and any individual with an interest in Special Education

Survey Overview

- Survey goal was to obtain feedback on how the SEPAC can support Andover's Special Education community
 - Survey created in December 2020 during Hybrid/Remote Learning
 - Closed May 2020 during transition to increased in-person learning
- 155 Total Responses
 - 145 Guardians, Students (unknown)
 - 5 Teachers
 - 1 Administrator
 - 1 Service Provider
 - 3 Other

Feedback about SEPAC Operations

- Preference for meetings
 - Earlier in the week Monday or Tuesday
 - Evening meetings with a 7pm start
- Increase outreach to the Andover community
 - Informal discussion and networking opportunities
- Training topics of interest
 - Executive Functioning
 - Anxiety
- Support group of interest
 - Language-based learning disabilities
 - ADHD
 - Autism
 - Available services and accommodations

SEPAC Action Items

- Change meetings from Thursday to Tuesday at 7pm
 - Completed in September 2021
- Increase outreach to eligible members: Attendance has increased
 - August 2021 – Published schedule for September - January
 - September 2021 – Hosted in-person and virtual meet-and-greet to welcome new parents
 - September 2021 – Hosted table at the Andover Thrives event
 - September 2021 – Connected with PTOs to share information and schedule
 - October 2021 – Created and deployed marketing material (i.e. brochures) to be sent home to families in the district
 - October 2021 – Hosted Basic Rights workshop
 - November 2021 – Hosted meeting with Dr. Parvey, new superintendent.
 - January 2022 – Hosted Executive Functioning and ADHD workshop
 - March 2022 – Hosted Q&A for Andover School Committee Candidates
 - March 2022 – Hosted Tour of Student Services with Dr. Stetson and Team
 - April 2022 – Hosted Presentation on Special Needs Financial and Estate Planning
 - April 2022 – Hosted Presentation by the Director of Children’s Dyslexia Centers
 - April 2022 – Staffed a table at the West El Mini Golf Event
 - June 2022 – Assisting with Andover/North Andover Special Olympics

Feedback about Student Services Operations

Positive

- Value regular contact with case managers
- Increased guardian accessibility to curriculum and services

Opportunities for Improvement

- Regular, timely communication with case managers
- Parent training in technology
- Educate SEPAC on available services and resources
- Help connect guardians with SEPAC at beginning of school year as well as at IEP and Progress Report meeting times
- Increase partnership with guardians to reinforce student skills and improve success
- Consistency in communication and delivery across schools, levels, and year

Additional Feedback (Paraphrased)

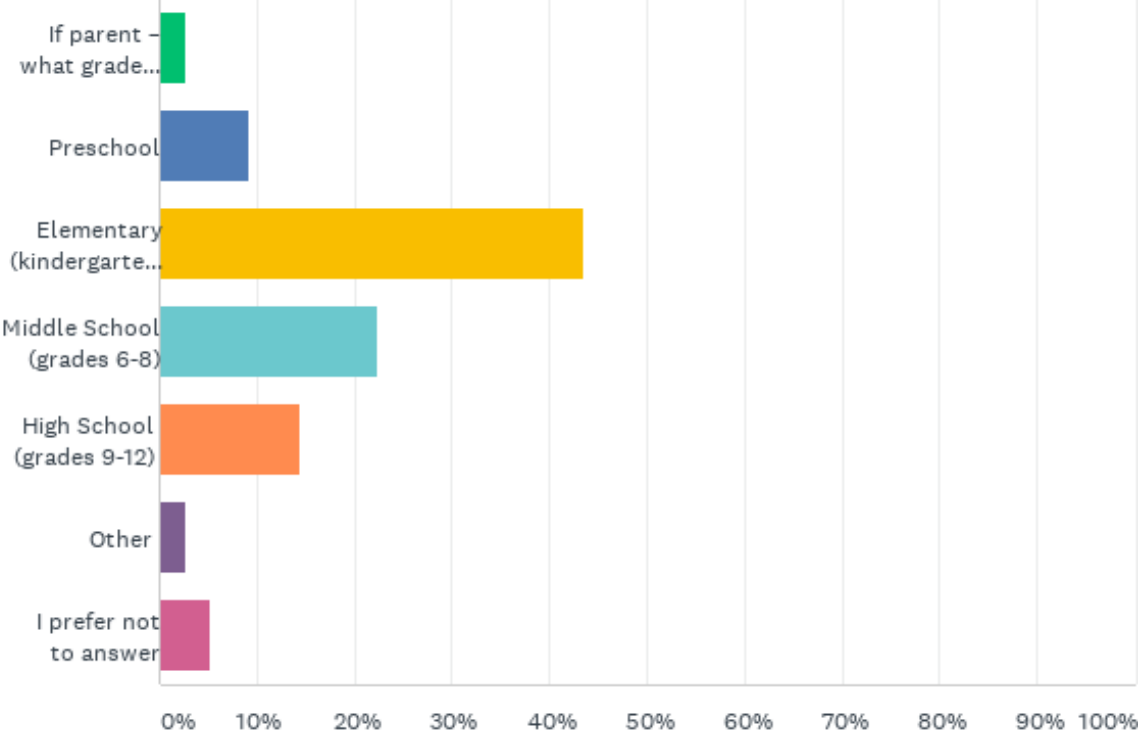
- Academic Support Teachers, Counselors, School Social Workers, Special Ed Assistants were all noted as critical in improving success in the General Ed classrooms.
- Daily journals from the Special Ed teacher helped families understand what is being taught, wish this service had been known sooner than last year.
- Transition between EL and MS, and MS and HS should be better coordinated.
- Greater Executive Function skills/study skills training for all students at the EL and MS levels to improve independence by HS.
- Variability in team coordination, communications highlighted as critical - some found communications were strong, others significantly lacking. Better use of and timely update of Schoology/Aspen also recommended.

Actions requested

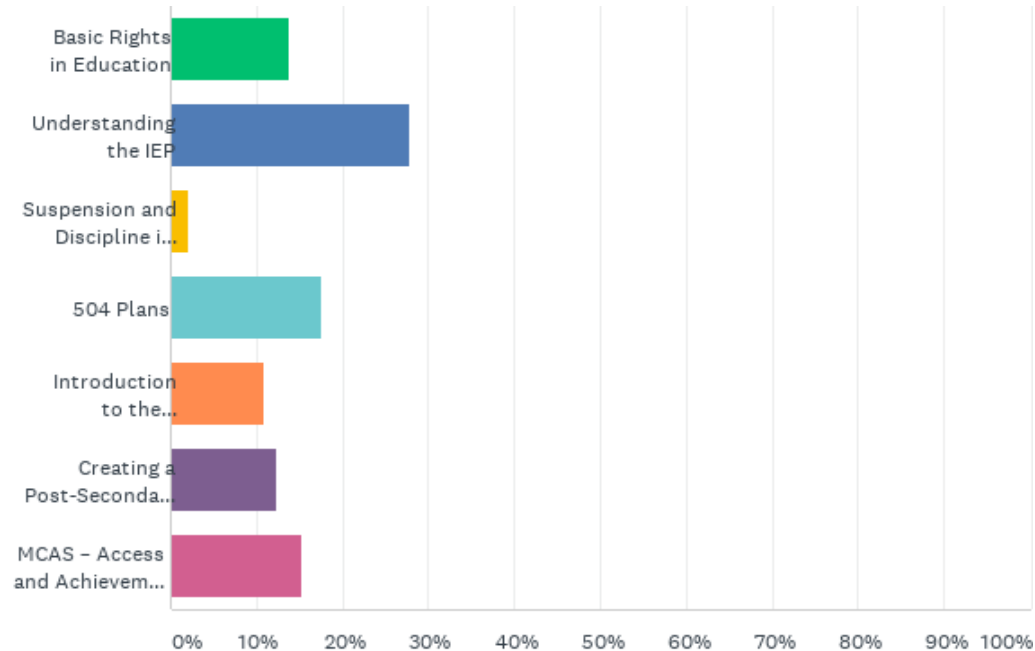
- Provide “Tour of Student Services” to educate SEPAC about programming, services, and available resources
- Help promote SEPAC
 - Distribute SEPAC brochure with IEP forms as well as with Notice of Procedural Safeguards
 - Share SEPAC meeting and event information with the entire APS community
- Consider more frequent check-ins between teachers and parents/guardians
 - Monthly mini progress reports
 - Daily journals from Special Ed teachers
- Consider hosting annual workshops on transitions
- Standardize method and frequency of communication from teachers

Appendix

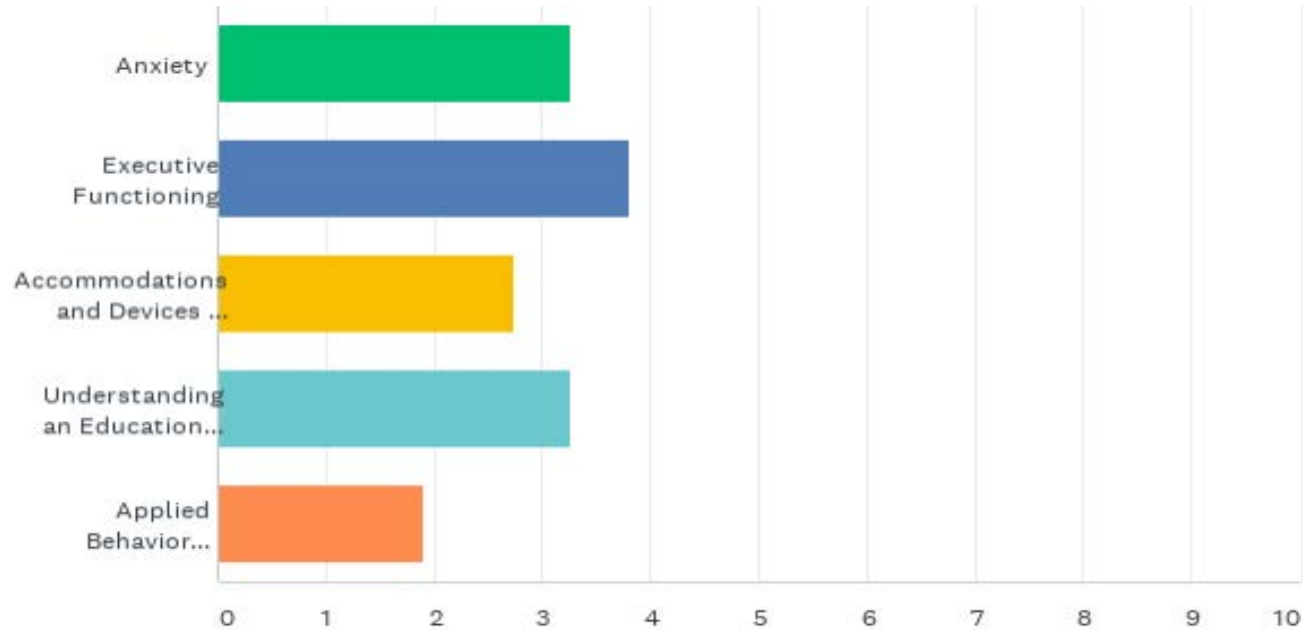
Responses by Grade (Grouped)



Question: Which free Federation for Children with Special Needs workshops would you be most likely to attend?



Question: Which training topics would you be interested in attending, presented by local specialists? Please rank in order of preference.



Question:
If you are interested
in a support group,
what topics are of
most interest?

Topic	Percent
Language Based Learning Disabilities	23%
Other	18%
ADHD	16%
Autism	16%
Social Skills and Emotional Concerns	7%
Advocacy	7%
Accommodations	7%
Connections	7%

Question: Are there any experiences, services, or processes related to Special Education in Andover that have worked well or that you would like to see expanded?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Ability to access Schoology/Seesaw	22.54%	16
academic support meetings with my child's case manager	25.35%	18
live synchronous IEP services	36.62%	26
adapted digital materials	14.08%	10
regular contact with my child's case manager	35.21%	25
Other , please describe	30.99%	22
Total Respondents: 71		

Question: What can the student services department do to increase your child's benefit from services? Please check all that apply.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Regular office hours with case manager	48.68%	37
More formats for work (eg. paper packets)	36.84%	28
Better/more software for skills practice	27.63%	21
Better accessibility (eg., Can't access the content that is posted due to a disability)	10.53%	8
Parent training in technology	35.53%	27
student training in technology	22.37%	17
Other (please describe)	19.74%	15

Question:
Are there any areas for
recommended
improvement that you
would like to share with the
Special Education
Department in Andover, and
SEPAC?

- Request for connections to parents with students experiencing similar disabilities
- SEPAC: Form Parent Support Groups, Provide informal discussion venues like “Walk and Talk”.
- District: Provide SEPAC a generalized list of disabilities and topics within district informed by what Student Services sees across grade levels.
- District: Request for more frequent communications between case managers / Special Ed service providers and parents to: 1) Increase continuity of services / make sure implementation of services and accommodations is not interrupted between years or semesters. 2) Inform parents of progress and recommendations on how parents can reinforce learning at home to improve success. 3) More timely communications to address time-sensitive issues.
- District: Some providers reach out at the start of the year to establish communications at home - make this a consistent requirement across the District.
- District: Follow-up with check-ins before progress-report periods.
- District: Consider using a parent / home communications section on the Student’s Schoology platform.

Question:
Are there any areas for
recommended
improvement that you
would like to share the
Special Education
Department in Andover
& SEPAC?

- Request for improvement in Services / Supports in specific disability categories:
 - Language-based Learning Disabilities:
 - District: Earlier identification and implementation of Reading Services / not waiting until Second Grade.
 - District: Continuation or integration of Reading Comprehension at the HS level including supported classes for Social Studies and Science
 - District: Implementing Special Ed curriculum that benefits all students to avoid Reading Failure or catch more moderate students before entry into costly Special Ed Services.
 - Autism / ASD:
 - District: Training for staff to include evidence-based approaches to improve prompting, building on social skills, understanding of anxiety and bullying.
 - District: Greater sensitivity to placement requests at the MS level as comparable to EL placements, especially consideration of groups with “friendly peers” to reduce social anxiety.
 - ADHD / Executive Functioning:
 - District: Teach study skills and organization earlier in MS, consider use of MS flex for all students instead of Academic Connections at the HS level.

Question continued:
Are there any areas for
recommended
improvement that you
would like to share the
Special Education
Department in Andover
& SEPAC?

- Transitions:
 - Transition planning and options for post-HS that focus on students with Disabilities
 - Transition from 5th to 6th and 8th to 9th - students and families need a better understanding of how the IEP will affect classroom schedules and structure
 - Emphasis placed on use of flex schedules, foreign language blocks, H-blocks, and reduced electives at HS level
 - Timing of transition meetings in spring to optimize planning between schools
- Other:
 - Presentations or training for parents on how the 504 process operates
 - Empower students at a younger age (EL) to understand their 504 and self-advocate
 - Reduce “platform confusion” and narrow down use of Schoology, Aspen, Google, e-mail, and individual classroom websites
 - Consider how pull-out students are grouped with others based on cognitive ability and behaviors
 - More frequent communications about and visibility on programs including SAIL, BRIDGE, EXCEL and TOPS

Question: What can the student services department do to increase your child's benefit from services? Please check all that apply.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Regular office hours with case manager	48.68% 37
More formats for work (eg. paper packets)	36.84% 28
Better/more software for skills practice	27.63% 21
Better accessibility (eg., Can't access the content that is posted due to a disability)	10.53% 8
Parent training in technology	35.53% 27
student training in technology	22.37% 17
Other (please describe)	19.74% 15
Total Respondents: 76	

Question: From Hybrid Learning... What new techniques have worked well for your child?

- More responded that going back to in-person was better than remote, though some students did well with remote and video lessons
- Schoology does a better job than Aspen/Google Classroom in aggregating current performance and assignment information. Seesaw worked well for self-paced learning
- Focusing on consistent use of one platform, preferably Schoology, allows parents to help monitor work, expectations, and progress if it is updated in a timely manner
- Clear and explicit assignments that are posted in one place (Schoology preferred) and assistance from teachers/assistants with updated lists or easy access for parents to assist with staying organized
- IEP and 504 meetings with the option to be remote/virtual
- Accommodations including text-talk, bringing textbooks home, movement breaks
- Lexia and ST Math were specific noteworthy tools for reading and math assistance

Question: What positives have arisen for your family/child during Hybrid Learning?

- Greater access/understanding of what subject matter and homework assignments were given.
- Greater understanding by parent of student's deficits.
- Discovery of a variety of new online resources and activities
- Decreased social/performance anxiety
- Ability to focus without environmental distraction by being remote
- Some students experienced greater 1:1 support
- More at-home together time
- Greater understanding of how teachers interact with/teach students and greater ability to support learning at home

Question: What can Student Services help you with?

- Understanding Basic Rights, Evaluation and Eligibility for IEPs and 504s
- Making sure all teachers are aware of / following IEP's as implemented
- Improved communications across learning teams with parents
- Training to increase student and parent proficiency with Schoology
- Increase awareness and inclusivity for students with disabilities by educating both peers and parents in the community
- Help connect parents with SEPAC as a starting-point to find support when starting their journey in Special Education / new to IEPs
- Dispel myths around Special Education instruction being viewed as less-than General Ed instruction and implement more Special Ed evidence-based instruction related to organizational skills, reading, writing, and math that would benefit all students

Question: What portions of the Student Services website have you found most helpful?

Numerous respondents noted they were not aware of the Student Services website.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Virtual IEPs	45.33%	34
Health and Safety	4.00%	3
Mental Health	13.33%	10
Assessment	8.00%	6
Special protocols	4.00%	3
Contacts and communication	18.67%	14
Blended Learning	4.00%	3
Programs	12.00%	9
UDL Tools	5.33%	4
Accessibility Tools	6.67%	5
Operations	18.67%	14
Total Respondents: 75		