

A REVIEW OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMING AND SERVICES FOR MANCHESTER-ESSEX REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

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INTRODUCTION

EDCO Collaborative was contracted by Manchester Essex Regional School District to conduct a program review of special education services at the Manchester Essex Regional High School. Through a process that included focus groups, observations, and data collection, EDCO's charge was to provide Manchester Essex Regional School District with a comprehensive report identifying strengths, challenges, and recommendations for special education programming at the high school level.

Specifically:

1. How can best practices in inclusive instruction be promoted and supported?
2. Are additional supports needed to ensure smooth transition from Middle School to High School, i.e. staff training, resources, coaching?
3. Review the the roles of guidance and special education and how they intersect. Are changes needed?
4. Is the current pre-referral model effective in providing successful interventions for general education students?
5. How does the Academic Center interface with special education?

METHODOLODY

Data collection procedures were multifaceted, collaborative, and chosen to ensure input from multiple stakeholders. They included: focus groups, observations of programs and classes, interviews, review of student records, and parent and staff satisfaction surveys.

Fourteen focus groups were held and included parents, director of student services, special education chairperson, principal, department heads, general education teachers and program leaders, special educators working with students with mild to moderate disabilities and special educators in specialized programs, the speech and language pathologist, the school adjustment counselor, guidance counselors, and teaching assistants. Union leaders were invited to participate in a focus group, but declined.

Fifteen observations were conducted as part of this evaluation including Learning Strategies classes, specialized program classes, special education students in the inclusive setting, and a Teachers Assisting Teachers (TAT) meeting.

Twenty-two parents completed the Parent Satisfaction Survey. Twenty-one reported their child's grade level. Nine respondents are parents of 9^{th} grade students, six are parents of 10^{th} grade students, two are parents of 11^{th} grade students, and one is a parent of a 12^{th} grade student. One has a student in out of district placements and two responded "other".

Nineteen staff members completed the Staff Satisfaction Survey. The nineteen included ten general educators, one special educator in a specialized program, three special educators, one related service provider, one support staff and two "other".

SPECIAL EDUCATION AT MANCHESTER ESSEX REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OVERVIEW

The Data Analysis Review Tool (DART) is provided by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and allows districts to easily track their data and compare it to similar districts. "Similar districts" are defined as those with similar grade span, total enrollment, and special populations. Data related to students eligible for special education from ten districts deemed similar to Manchester-Essex Regional High School (DART data 2016-2017) is shown below:

Percentage of Students Eligible for Special Education

District/School	Enrollment	SWD %age
Georgetown: Georgetown High School	411	13.6%
Ipswich: Ipswich High School	543	12.3%
Leicester: Leicester High School	455	12.3%
Lunenburg: Lunenburg High School	439	12.5%
MANCHESTER ESSEX REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT: Manchester-Essex Regional High School	424	9.7%
Mendon-Upton: Nipmuc Regional High School	593	12.5%
Millis: Millis High School	390	11.0%
Newburyport: Newburyport High School	779	10.4%
Pentucket: Pentucket Regional Senior High School	734	11.3%
Sutton: Sutton High School	426	10.8%
Tyngsborough: Tyngsborough High School	507	8.9%
Massachusetts		17.7%

Disability Categories in Manchester-Essex High School compared to Massachusetts:

Disability Category	MANCHESTER ESSEX REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL SY18-19	Massachusetts SY16-17
Specific Learning Disability	33%	24.7%
Health	33%	13.0%
Developmental Delay	0%*	11.1%
Intellectual Impairment	0%	5.0%
Communication	10%	15.4%
Autism	8%	11.9%
Emotional	8%	9.3%
Neurological	5%	5.6%
Multiple Disabilities	2%	2.0%
Sensory	0%	1.2%
Physical	0%	0.6%

*Developmental Delay is not used as a classification for students older than nine years.

Educational environments for students age 6 -21 in Manchester Essex Regional High School compared to Massachusetts: (DESE SY18-19)

Educational Placement	MANCHESTER ESSEX REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL SY18-19	Massachusetts SY18-19
Full inclusion	85%	65.6%
Partial Inclusion	5%	14.4%
Substantially separate	5%	13.3%
Separate Schools, Residential/ Homebound/Hospital Placements	5%	6.7%

Indicator 1: Graduation Rate for Students with IEPS enrolled in MANCHESTER ESSEX REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

The state target and district and state rates for Indicator 1 are the most current data available. Data reported in the State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report reflect a one-year data lag in reporting.

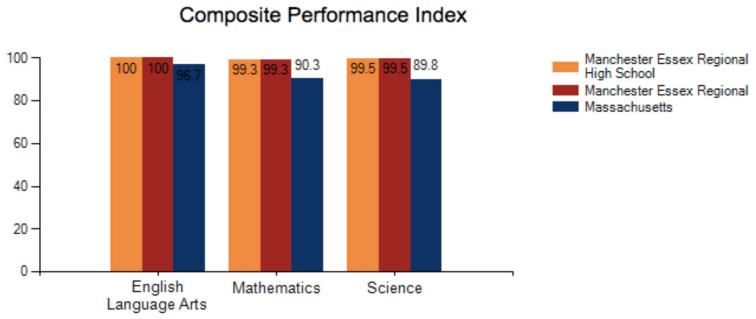
Reported	Cohort 2017 Graduates	# of Students In 2017 Cohort	District Rate	State Rate	State Target
Students with IEPs	20	20	100.0%	72.7%	86.0%
General Ed	89	92	96.7%	91.8%	NA
All Students	**109**	**112**	**97.3%**	**88.1%**	**NA**

STUDENT OUTCOMES

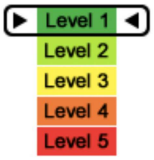
Manchester-Essex Regional School District participated in 2017 and 2018 Next Generation MCAS. Since 2017 was the first year of this testing the state has no comparative data, therefore, districts participating in Next Generation MCAS are not ranked. Student achievement data from 2017 and MCAS Legacy Data are provided below.

Legacy MCAS (CPI)

The Composite Performance Index (CPI) is a number from 1-100 that represents the extent to which students have attained or are progressing toward proficiency in a given subject. Students who demonstrate proficiency on MCAS tests, and students with severe cognitive disabilities who score at the Progressing level on the MCAS-Alternate assessment, receive 100 CPI points. Our school's CPIs for 2017 are below.



2017 School And District Accountability



How is this school doing overall?

Meeting gap narrowing goals

Most schools are assigned a level from 1-5, with those meeting their proficiency gap-narrowing goals in Level 1 and the lowest performing in Levels 4 and 5. A district is typically assigned a level based on the level of its lowest performing school. In 2017, the majority of schools and districts were given an accountability designation of "no level" if students in grades 3-8 participated in the Next-Generation MCAS tests. Placing schools and districts into levels helps districts know which schools need more support, and helps the state know which districts need the most assistance. More information is available here: http://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/.

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFFING

Department Staffing Structure

Dr. Allison Collins is the Director of Student Services for Manchester-Essex. There are two Team Chairpersons for the district, one supports the two elementary schools and one works at the middle and high schools.

Manchester Essex Regional High School

Total school population grades 9 through 12: 453 students
Percentage of students with disabilities: 9.7%
Special Education Teachers:

- Moderate Special Needs Teachers: 3
- SWING Program: 1
- Transitions Program: 1

Teaching Assistants: 3, shared among moderate special needs classes and specialized programming.

Related Services in special education: Reading, speech and language, occupational therapy, physical therapy, social skills, individual and group counseling, and behavioral support are provided for students as appropriate and indicated on students' IEP. Staff includes a Team Chairperson (shared with middle school), Speech and Language Pathologist (shared with middle school), Occupational Therapist and Physical Therapist (shared district-wide). General education related service providers include a School Adjustment Counselor and Guidance Counselors.

GENERAL EDUCATION STUDENT SUPPORTS/CONTINUUM OF SERVICES

The pre-referral process at Manchester Essex High School is called "Teachers Assisting Teachers" or TAT. The TAT Team is comprised of the high school principal, high school assistant principal, director of guidance, a guidance counselor, a department head (assigned on a rotating basis), and the teacher from the Bridge Program. A school counseling intern from Salem State participates in the meeting. Teachers bring concerns to the guidance department, guidance in turn shares the concern with TAT. The Team then brainstorms strategies to support the teacher and an action plan is created.

The **Academic Center** is a general education initiative geared toward temporary support of students who are struggling, primarily, students with executive functioning or social emotional challenges. A teacher and teaching assistant staff the Academic Center. Typically, the Academic Center is built into student schedules for one period per day. The Zones of Regulation program, a curriculum geared toward helping students gain skills to consciously regulate their actions and increase problem solving abilities, is widely used in the Academic Center. Students deemed ready to move to a more independent setting "graduate" from the Academic Center and return to general education classes.

The Bridge Program is another general education program for students who have missed consecutive school days due to medical or emotional issues and need support to make a seamless transition back to regular education classes. Students are also supported by the school adjustment counselor.

Manchester Essex Regional High School also offers "U block" as part of the regular schedule. U block is a 50-minute directed study that is scheduled for all students and faculty at the same time. The block may be used by students to complete homework, receive extra help from a teacher, meet with guidance or adjustment counselor, make up tests or quizzes, or to take a mental break. The block is strategically scheduled in mid-morning.

Manchester Essex Regional High School has also adopted the RULER program, an evidence-based approach for integrating social and emotional learning into schools, developed at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. RULER teaches the skills of emotional intelligence, considered to be essential to effective teaching and learning, sound decision making, physical and mental health, and success in school and beyond.

SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Inclusion support: General and special education teachers or teaching assistants work cooperatively in general education classrooms in co-teaching or inclusion support models. Curriculum is based on the Massachusetts State Curriculum Frameworks and academic skills, study skills, and organizational skills are fostered.

Learning Strategies is a regularly scheduled course designed to support individual skill development as determined by each student's Individualized Education Program. Areas of focus may include reading (decoding and comprehension), writing, math, study skills, test preparation, and self-advocacy. As students progress through the high school, they assume more responsibility for their education and become more independent learners.

The **Transitions Program** provides a comprehensive academic and social support model for students who require specialized assistance and ongoing case management. The program is supported by a certified special education teacher with specialized training in transition planning. The high school adjustment counselor also provides emotional and

social pragmatic supports and training for students in the program. Students accessing the Transitions Program may enroll in small, self-contained special education classes, co-taught or supported academic classes, and/or learning strategies tutorials.

The **SWING Program** (Students with Integrated Goals) is staffed by an interdisciplinary team that includes a certified special education teacher, psychologist, teaching assistants, adjustment counselor, occupational therapist, speech and language pathologist, and physical therapist. Students participate in a combination of inclusive classes, small group instruction, and individual tutorials in addition to therapies, social skills groups, and specialized case management. In addition, students receive supervision and support during unstructured times, including lunch, recess, and transitions.

SWING Specialized Program Components include:

- Self-contained classes utilizing a curriculum aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, and incorporating hands on projects, life skills, and functional academics;
- Assessments, research based methods, and ongoing data collection;
- Individualized instruction designed to support student strengths and address vulnerabilities;
- Behavioral support, monitoring, and intervention using Applied Behavior Analysis; and
- Extensive home-school communication, and establishment of partnerships between parents and program staff.

Specialized instruction and methodologies in the SWING Program include:

- Positive Behavior Intervention Supports
- Social Thinking Groups
- Specialized Reading and Math Methodologies
- Assistive Technology
- Transition Portfolio Development

Intensive Reading and Written Language (IRWL) students at the high school receive individualized language based instruction and support services that may include reading tutorials, literacy class, small group instruction, Learning Strategies, and Assistive Technology programming designed by the Digital Technology Specialist.

FOCUS GROUP AND SURVEY RESULTS: PERCEPTIONS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AT MANCHESTER ESSEX REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

IMPRESSIONS – PARENT FOCUS GROUP

One parent, representing her son with "classic learning disabilities," attended the focus group offered for parents and guardians. When asked what the school does well for students with disabilities she stated, they are "exceptional from top to bottom."

She explained the district has been receptive to exploring different service options. She complimented two of the special education liaisons in particular, stating it was wonderful to have a veteran liaison for her child during freshman year. She also commended the teaching assistants for their "excellent skill level."

She describes the school principal as "phenomenal" and the team chairperson as "awesome."

When asked about areas that could be changed or improved, she noted that her child had several different special education teachers and assistants across the four content areas and feels this is not ideal.

In addition, she noted confusion over the roles of liaisons working with her child, particularly guidance counselors and the school adjustment counselor. She does not feel guidance counselors have knowledge or expertise to work with students with disabilities and believes they are reluctant to take pass responsibility for these students.

IMPRESSIONS: PARENT SATISFACTION SURVEY (22 RESPONDENTS - SEE APPENDIX FOR FURTHER BREAKDOWN)

Parents were asked for the category of their students' disabilities and reported as follows*: Specific Learning Disability – 10
Autism Spectrum Disorder – 4
Developmental Delay – 3**
Neurological – 3
Health – 3
Emotional – 1
Communication – 1
Not sure - 1
*please note, some responded with multiple disabilities
**Developmental Delay is not used as a classification for students older than grade nine.

Twelve respondents reported their child was found eligible for special education while in Pre-K, primary or elementary school. Six reported their student was found eligible for special education services while in middle school and two reported a finding of eligibility while in high school.

EVALUATIONS

Fifteen parents who responded agree or strongly agree that Manchester-Essex Regional High School provides evaluations that are thorough and comprehensive and evaluations include specific recommendations. Two disagree or strongly disagree. Fourteen feel evaluations accurately reflect their child's needs, sixteen feel the results are communicated in a manner that helps them understand their child's disability and learning needs.

Eight parents or guardians who responded agree or strongly agree that general education teachers are made aware of evaluation results with seven in disagreement.

IEPS/PROGRESS REPORTS

Overall, parents are satisfied with their child's Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and progress reports. Nineteen respondents agree or strongly agree their concerns and requests are documented in the IEP or cover letter. Sixteen feel the IEP accurately reflects the Team's discussion with one in disagreement.

Seventeen respondents agree or strongly agree the IEP states how progress toward goals and objectives will be measured, two disagree.

Thirteen respondents agree there are a variety of methodologies considered by the Team, four disagree. Thirteen also agree or strongly agree that services and supports are provided as stated in the IEP, three disagree. Fifteen parents or guardians agree or strongly agree their children are making progress on IEP goals, five disagree or strongly disagree.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The majority of parents also are satisfied with the level of involvement they are provided. Sixteen parents who responded to the survey feel they are equal partners in planning their child's individual education program, three disagree. An overwhelming number of parents, twenty-one, feel they are treated in a professional manner and nineteen feel district staff are available and accessible.

Fifteen parents agree or strongly agree communication from district staff is sufficient to keep them informed, three disagree or strongly disagree.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Of parents who responded to the survey, eighteen agree special educators make accommodations and modifications as documented in the IEP, two strongly disagree.

Fewer, ten respondents, agree general education teachers are aware of their child's disability and related needs and provide accommodations and modifications as documented in the IEP. Six parents disagree. Regarding collaboration between special and general educators, ten parents agree it is sufficient, five disagree.

Parents are split regarding whether or not general education teachers demonstrate an understanding of their child's disability and related needs. Seven agree they do, nine are neutral, and five disagree.

Parents do not appear to have an awareness of social emotional supports available at Manchester Essex Regional High School. Nine parents are neutral or did not respond regarding their satisfaction with the social emotional support their child receives, seven agree they are satisfied and six disagree.

Similarly, parents of students with disabilities are not aware of the scope of extra curricular activities offerings and supports offered by the district. Only six parents who responded to the survey feel the high school ensures that after-school and extra-curricular activities are accessible to students with disabilities, eleven are neutral or shared no opinion and six disagree.

Overall, fourteen respondents are happy with the special education services their child receives; eighteen percent disagree. Ten parents feel their child is happy at school, four or eighteen percent are neutral and six disagree.

Several parents who completed the satisfaction survey made additional comments. Of these, three feel general educators do not provide accommodations and modifications as written in the Individualized Education Program, one expressed a need for more general educators and aides to support students with disabilities, one reported communication takes place only when initiated by parents.

PARENT SURVEY SUMMARY

Of the twenty-two parents or guardians of students with disabilities at Manchester Essex Regional High School who responded to the parent satisfaction survey most parents report a high level of satisfaction with evaluations, IEPs, and parent involvement. With regard to programs and services, although most feel special educators make accommodations and modifications as documented in the IEP, fewer feel general educators are aware of their child's disability and provide accommodations and modifications accordingly.

IMPRESSIONS – STUDENT FOCUS GROUPS

Five students took part in Student Focus Groups. When asked what the school is doing well for students with disabilities, all cited the skills and dedication of special education liaisons. Regarding the four liaisons in Learning Strategies, the following comments were made:

"They understanding everyone's strengths and weaknesses, no one is categorized."
"If one teacher is busy, there is always someone else to help you."
"They help put you in the right direction and eventually you can do it yourself."
"They show you your IEP, help you to understand it, and explain what they can do to help you. During the year they check to see if it's working."

“They know how to break it down for you and let you learn to your ability.”
“You set goals for yourself in Learning Strats and think about what you need to do to improve.”

All students reported taking active parts in their Team meetings. By doing so, they are familiarized with their accommodations and enabled to self-advocate. Although several felt uncomfortable doing this at middle school, teachers have encouraged and facilitated self-advocacy at the high school. In addition, two students reported realizing they no longer needed certain accommodations and were able to remove them at the next IEP meeting.

Students feel they learn as much as typical students but they are taught at a different pace. One student who participated in the Intensive Reading and Written Language (IRWL) Program at Manchester-Essex Middle School feels he was well prepared to participate in general education language arts classes due to the extensive writing instruction he had in middle school. In fact, he often feels he is better prepared than typical peers.

Students also mentioned the benefits of having the “U block” in the schedule as it allows them time to meet with teachers if any work is hard for them. They can also use this time to access Learning Strategies teachers.

Two students reported they are involved in sports and this required time management skills. They have received support with this in Learning Strategies and are able to balance school work and sports.

When asked what needed to change or what could be improved, one student said, “the positives outweigh any negatives.” Another said, “there are no weaknesses in Strats or the teachers.”

One student cited an issue around foreign language reporting she has not taken a language since elementary school and would not feel comfortable doing so since peers have taken a language each year. She feels there should be an accommodation for students with disabilities to “opt out” of foreign language entirely.
Another student said that occasionally, there are many students in Strategies classes and the focus may not be on you or what you are doing.

When asked about pressure they might feel due to the high expectations at Manchester Essex, one student shared advice he had received from a special education liaison: “Focus on yourself. Don’t compare yourself to other kids. You attend one of best schools in the state, many students will struggle because expectations are higher.”

IMPRESSIONS – STAFF FOCUS GROUPS:
Focus groups were scheduled for the Principal, Assistant Principal, Director of Special Services Team Chairperson, Department Heads, Guidance and School Adjustment Counselors, Special Education Liaisons, Teaching Assistants, Academic Center staff, Speech and Language Pathologist, Digital Learning Specialist, general educators, and Manchester Essex Teacher's Association (META) representatives. Neither general educators nor META representatives participated.

Overall, staff are positive regarding services for students with disabilities at Manchester-Essex Regional High School. They see the relatively small size of the school as a means for consistent communication, albeit informal. Teachers expressed a comfort level with the co-teaching model and believe that general educators, special educators, and teaching assistants work to ensure students are provided with skills that will lead toward independence.

All special educators expressed gratitude toward both regular and special education administration for their support and advocacy. They feel supported and have been provided with a variety of resources to meet the needs of their students and deal with challenges that arise.

IMPRESSIONS: STAFF SATISFACTION SURVEY
Nineteen staff members responded to the staff satisfaction survey. By role, there were ten general educators, four special educators, one related service provider, one support staff and two "other." Arts as well as each of the four major content areas were represented by respondents.

COMMUNICATION
A majority of teachers who completed the staff satisfaction survey, sixteen, agree there is sufficient communication between special education and general education staff regarding the needs and progress of students with disabilities. However, only two believe there is sufficient time for general and special educators to collaborate. Eleven respondents feel there is insufficient time for collaboration.

Eleven respondents feel their Department Chair ensures they have sufficient information and strategies to work with students with disabilities in their classes, ten feel their Department Chair models effective content area practices for working with students with disabilities. Thirteen respondents believe general education teachers are provided with sufficient information and support for helping students with disabilities in their classrooms.

Fourteen general educators agree they are supported by their Department Chair when facing challenges related to teaching or serving students with disabilities. Fifteen agree they are supported by the principal when facing these challenges, eleven feel the Director of Student Services and High School Team Chairperson support them.

Regarding teaching assistants, twelve respondents agree assistants are effectively assigned in order to support the learning and progress of students with disabilities. Similarly, fourteen agree teaching assistants are utilized effectively to support students with disabilities and twelve feel teaching assistants are sufficiently trained to provide instruction support to students with disabilities.

Regarding the co-teaching model, two respondents feel there has been adequate training to ensure effectiveness, six disagree and four are neutral or have no opinion. However, eight respondents feel the model is effective and beneficial for both students with disabilities and general education students. Respondents noted there is insufficient time for planning and collaboration.

Sixty-four percent of staff who completed the survey agree the district provides sufficient professional learning options related to meeting the needs of students with disabilities, five percent disagree. Seventy-four percent agree the training sessions they have attended have been useful to them in supporting the learning of students with disabilities, no one was in disagreement. Seventy-four percent feel general educators need more focused professional development on how disabilities are manifested in the classroom.

SPECIAL EDUCATION PROCESSES

Regarding the pre-referral process, Teachers Assisting Teachers (TAT), twelve respondents agree the school makes every attempt to meet the unique needs of students through the TAT process before a district referral to special education is made, none were in disagreement. Ten feel the process is clearly defined with a designated contact person, process and follow-up procedures, eleven percent disagree. Fewer, eight respondents agree TAT provides helpful and appropriate interventions prior to referral and reasonable follow-up.

Seventeen respondents agree the evaluations conducted through the special education process are sufficiently comprehensive to identify students' specific strengths and needs and fourteen agree the results of special education evaluations are shared in ways that provide meaningful insights into students' educational needs.

Regarding the IEP (Individualized Education Program) process, twelve respondents agree the process in the school involves general and special education teachers as equal partners in making recommendations, one does not agree. Ten agree accommodations identified in IEPs are developed collaboratively between general and special educators, three disagree. Twelve agree accommodations are consistently delivered by general educators, seven are neutral or shared no opinion and none disagree.

Seventeen of staff responding agree student's IEP goals and objectives promote skills that align with the Massachusetts curriculum standards. Overwhelmingly, staff agree

the special education services identified in their students' IEPs are consistently provided by special educators.

Regarding progress monitoring, thirteen respondents agree there is a consistent approach to progress monitoring, a schedule, and methods/tools for monitoring the progress of students with disabilities, one does not agree. Eight respondents are neutral or do not have an opinion regarding the school's report card effectively communicating progress of students with disabilities, nine agree, two disagree.

There is clear agreement that the Team considers the least restrictive environment in making recommendations for special education services.

Eleven of staff responding agree specialized programs at MERHS are sufficient to meet the needs of all students, five disagree. Fourteen feel students in specialized programs are taught strategies to promote independence and facilitate movement to a lesser restrictive setting, five are neutral and none disagree.

PARENT COMMUNICATION

Asked about parent communication and involvement, seventeen of staff responding to the survey agree parents are given the opportunity to participate as partners in evaluating their child's needs, none disagree. Similarly, staff agree parents are encouraged to participate in making decisions about their children's educational programs and services and the school effectively responds to the needs and concerns of parents of children with disabilities.

Fifteen of staff responding feel their professional recommendations are valued by parents and family members, one does not agree.

SCHOOL CULTURE

There is clear agreement among staff that students with disabilities placed in the inclusion setting receive a benefit from interacting with typical peers. Staff who responded also agree overwhelmingly that students with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in school-sponsored activities such as field trips, extracurricular activities, and sporting events.

Regarding teacher expectations for students with disabilities, four respondents feel they are too high, seven disagree. Five respondents feel teacher expectations are reduced for students with disabilities, eight disagree.

PROFESIONAL LEARNING

Twelve respondents agree the district provides sufficient professional learning options related to meeting the needs of students with disabilities, one disagrees. Fourteen agree the district provides useful professional learning related to meeting the needs of students with disabilities, none disagree. Similarly, fourteen agree general education

teachers need more focused professional development on how disabilities are manifested in the classroom and two disagree.

STAFF SURVEY SUMMARY

Overall, eighteen of MERHS staff respondents feel the school delivers high quality education programs and services for students with disabilities and meets the needs of students with disabilities in the district.

Staff member responses clearly indicated the need for designated time for collaboration and planning among general educators, special educators, related therapists, and teaching assistants.

OBSERVATIONS

A variety of classes were observed including co-taught general education classes, general education classes supported by special education staff, Learning Strategies classes, and specialized programs. In addition, a Teachers Assisting Teachers meeting was observed.

Manchester Essex Regional High School presents as a warm and welcoming environment, conducive to learning. This observer was genially greeted by students, teachers and staff alike. The physical environment includes visuals indicative of cultural diversity and high expectations for all. The third floor, home to most math and sciences, is adorned with groupings of familiar and exotic plants likely to heighten the curiosity of passersby. On the second floor, the Learning Commons, formerly the media center, was renovated as a learning environment that fosters the intellectual and social development of middle and high school students while providing a resource collection, based on the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks, developmental needs of the students, and subject content.

Many examples of best practice were observed during these observations. Schedules, word walls, instructions, websites, and supporting visuals adorned white boards and bulletin boards throughout the school. In most classrooms goals and objectives for the day were posted. Students are typically provided with wait time and often asked to repeat or clarify verbal directions. Teachers often referred students to Google classroom. Google Classroom is used in a variety of ways including managing assignments, providing feedback, and communicating with students and their parents.

Many examples of technology integration were observed including extensive use of Chromebooks and SMART Boards. Several examples of differentiated instruction were also observed. Students were often provided choices regarding assignments, assessments, and in classroom environment.

Teaching Assistants supported many of the classrooms observed. Overall, assistants appeared to be knowledgeable regarding students and content. Interaction among teachers, assistants and students was easy and respectful.

A focus at Manchester Essex High School is a "kids first culture." This culture was supported by both focus group discussions and observations.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS - COMMENDATIONS

My thanks to all staff members and parents who participated in the focus groups, surveys, and interviews. Educators, parents, and students alike participated in focus groups in an open and honest manner. Observations were sufficient to gain an understanding of special education processes and staff collaboration.

STAFFING

Staff and parents agree that students with disabilities in Manchester Essex are provided with high quality education programs and services. Survey data and information shared through focus groups is positive, overall, regarding programs and services for students with disabilities.

Manchester Essex administrators are considered by parents, staff, and students to be supportive. A majority of staff feel the department chairs ensure there is sufficient information and strategies to work with students with disabilities in their classes.

Staff also feel they are supported by the school principal, team chairperson, and director of special services when facing challenges. Training provided by the Student Services Department is much appreciated. Staff highlighted the workshop on Autism Spectrum Disorder offered recently as being very helpful.

One general education teacher opined the special education teachers are "passionate, they stay in touch with general educators. The structure of Learning Strategies classes is such that kids gain independence as they go."

Special education staff reported the director of student services "does everything she can to be proactive." In addition, they are grateful to the team chairperson for her support with students and her efforts to share workshops that are relevant. Examples include training offered by the Aspergers/Autism Network (AANE) and Transition workshops. Staff also reported the district is supportive when staff members research and find workshops and seek funding to attend.

There is a shared model of supervision for special educators. The principal, director of student services, and special education chairperson are involved in evaluating special education staff. This is ideal as teachers have the opportunity to receive feedback regarding special education responsibilities as well as curriculum, planning and assessment.

Staff, parents and students offered high praise for Teaching assistants at Manchester Essex Regional High School. Assistants were called "phenomenal." Longevity is credited for their understanding of curriculum and ability to work well with general educators. Assistants reported they feel respected and are comfortable sharing suggestions for accommodations and modifications.

A relatively new position at Manchester Essex High School is the Digital Learning Specialist. The specialist describes her position as "helping people to get what they need from technology and providing instructional technology support." She works individually with students with disabilities, matching their needs to technology tools. This position has been a tremendous asset to students formerly in the IRWL program. The learning specialist is able to work with these students to ensure they have appropriate technology accommodations. In addition, the learning specialist worked with the TAT to provide a paperless process.

COMMUNICATION

A majority of parents of students with disabilities report they are equal partners in Team Process. They feel respected and believe staff are available and accessible. Special education staff reported that when the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) asked for parent training several years ago, they were able to provide informational workshops on post-secondary planning and self-advocacy.

PROGRAMS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

The Learning Strategies model of service delivery was also praised by staff, parents, and students alike. Liaisons are viewed as dedicated, knowledgeable and compassionate. Observations of Strategies classes reinforced this and exemplified how well all moderate special education liaisons know the students.

Students report the liaisons "put them in the right direction." They shared that they were taught at an early age about the importance of self-advocacy and Strategies teachers have continued this work, empowering students to be active participants in their Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings. They opine, the school is exceptional at "understanding everyone's strengths and weaknesses; no one is categorized." They feel they are able to learn the same amount as typical students, although they are taught at a different pace. Many students reported working on time management. Several participate in sports so time management is especially important. Understanding their disabilities and services allows them to know when they no longer need an accommodation.

Manchester Essex Regional High School offers several specialized programs for students with disabilities and for students who need short term support. All programs are reported to have entry and exit criteria. A majority of staff and parents agree specialized programs at Manchester Essex Regional High School are sufficient to meet the needs of all students. They also report students in specialized programs are taught

strategies to promote independence and facilitate movement to a lesser restrictive setting.

Many students are ready to exit the Intensive Reading and Written program at the high school and steps are taken to ensure a seamless transition. Students in the high school IRWL program have options for co-taught, supported, and small group classes, literacy and reading tutorials, and individualized assistive technology programming designed by the Digital Technology Specialist. Former IRWL students report they feel better prepared for writing assignments than typical peers.

Manchester Essex also offers programming for students with high functioning autism and/or social emotional disabilities. The Transitions Program at Manchester Essex High School provides a comprehensive academic and social support model for students who require specialized assistance and ongoing case management. As part of the program, Transitions students utilize a daily chart that tracks preparedness and behavior. In addition, students complete Pre-Reflection and Reflection sheets bi-weekly.

A general education program, The Academic Center, is an initiative geared toward temporary support of students who are struggling with executive functioning and other academic challenges. The space where the Academic Center is housed is calm and welcoming. A teacher and teaching assistant share responsibilities for Academic Center students. The center uses the Zones of Regulation program and provides a safe and supportive transition for students struggling in the mainstream and focuses on reintegration to inclusive classes.

The BRIDGE program supports students transitioning from hospitalization for medical or mental health needs. Bridge provides a safe and supportive transition for students struggling in the mainstream and focuses on reintegration to inclusive classes.

A fifty-minute block is set aside each day as “U Block.” Students in the focus groups report U block is most helpful as it provides a time for them to meet with teachers if they are finding assignments challenging or preparing for a test.

Staff report extra curricular activities are available for students with disabilities and site student participation in Cross Country. Special educators mentioned the district hires a support person when necessary to provide students with disabilities accessibility to activities.

SPECIAL EDUCATION PROCESSES

Manchester Essex is doing well diagnostically. The majority of both parents and staff feel evaluations are thorough and comprehensive and accurately reflect their child’s needs. Most also agree evaluation results are communicated in a clear manner that helps them understand their child’s learning needs.

Similarly, the majority of parent respondents agree their concerns and requests are documented in the Individualized Education Program or cover letter and feel the IEP accurately reflects the Team's discussion. Most also agree their children are making progress on IEP goals.

The majority of staff agree the Team process at the high school involves general and special education teachers as equal partners in making recommendations and the special education services identified in their students' IEPs are consistently provided by special education.

SUMMARY

Overall, special education is respected and supported at Manchester Essex High School. Both parents and general education staff expressed gratitude for the work of special educators and teaching assistants. A majority of parents and staff who responded to the surveys report feel their school delivers high quality programs and services for students with disabilities. Many respondents noted they are impressed with the personal attention offered by staff. They feel staff get to know the students and put student at center of focus.

The array of programming at Manchester Essex is impressive, particularly given the small size of the school. Support programming exists for both students with disabilities and general education students. The flexibility of the daily schedule is conducive to offering support for students.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

COMMUNICATION

Staff report communication is occurring informally but would appreciate having a specified time to collaborate. The principal indicates as a school they have tried to change the schedule to make improvements with the aim of accommodating teachers and getting more students involved. Related therapists who also work at Manchester Essex Middle School report particular challenges in scheduling at two schools where start and end times of blocks widely differ. This also impacts their ability to communicate with other Team members.

A majority of parents feel general education teachers are aware of their child's disability and related needs and provide accommodations and modifications as documented in the IEP, six, or twenty-seven percent disagree. Ten parents or forty-five percent agree collaboration between special and general is sufficient. Similarly, only seven, or thirty-two percent of parents agree general education teachers demonstrate an understanding of their child's disability and related needs.

Given these parent perceptions and concerns raised by staff it is recommended that a small committee of educators research how planning time is handled in nearby and like districts.

Focus groups reinforced a lack of understanding around the intersection of Guidance and Special Education. Parents reported they do not feel that counselors are aware of student profiles and needs that will be important for post secondary planning. It is recommended that counselors work with special education liaisons to review student profiles and attend Team meetings, so that they may serve as another point person for students with disabilities. Quarterly meetings including guidance and special education liaisons would support counselors in scheduling and advocating for their students with disabilities.

PROGRAMS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

The Teachers Assisting Teachers (TAT) process at Manchester Essex High School is functioning well. Teachers are well aware of the process and understand how to initiate a referral. Several disagree, however, that the team provides helpful and appropriate interventions prior to referral and that there is reasonable follow-up. This was an area of concern raised by the principal in a focus group and one that is being studied. Although the director of guidance is a member of the TAT team, the role of guidance in the process is unclear. It is recommended that guidance staff be more actively involved in lower tier interventions to support students with social-emotional challenges. Please see excerpts from the *DESE Multi-Tiered Systems of Support* (*MTSS) Quick Reference Guide: Student Support Teams (SSTs)* in Appendix B.

The Learning Strategies model of service delivery was praised by staff, parents, and students alike. The Strategies classroom is shared by four liaisons; typically, one liaison and one teaching assistant are scheduled to work with students in a given block. At times, other liaisons may have a planning block and are working at their desks in the classroom. Although liaisons report the ease of collaboration in this setting, there are also negatives. Liaisons who are planning may be "pulled in" to a student's assignment if the assigned teacher is working with someone else. In addition, liaisons do not have privacy for phone calls in the current space. Strategies teachers are to be commended for their collaboration and making the space work.

Manchester Essex High School provides several excellent specialized programming options and it is widely believed that students with disabilities in the inclusion setting receive a benefit from interacting with and modeling typical peers.

The SWING Program is relatively new to the high school and currently two students are part of SWING. It is evident they have been afforded many opportunities to be involved in the life of the school. As the high school SWING program grows, it will be important to continue to ensure students have opportunities to interact with typical peers.

Only six parents who responded to the survey agree extracurricular activities are available and accessible for students with disabilities. However, according to high school staff, roughly sixty percent of high school students with disabilities participate in some type of extracurricular activity. Staff report several students are three season athletes and participate in soccer, football, field hockey, lacrosse, swim team, sailing, baseball, track/cross country and/or ice hockey. Other students with disabilities participate in band, chorus, debate, drama, robotics team, art club or DECA. When needed, staff support is provided for students during practice and/or events, as well as for related field trips.

Staff report relatively few freshmen participate in extracurricular. It is recommended information about these activities be included in the Guidance Department's New Student Orientation program.

Regarding the transition from grade eight to the high school, special educators report they are provided with written and verbal information on students with disabilities who will be transitioning. They agree, though, that an opportunity to observe the students, to have a "face with a name," would be extremely helpful to them as they bring information back to help department heads prepare their respective teams to meet the needs of these students. It is recommended that time be set aside in the spring for liaisons to observe incoming students at the middle school.

General and special education programs including the Academic Center, Bridge, and the Transitions program have proven to be successful and have supported many students with social emotional challenges. As general education programs continue to serve these struggling students, liaisons should continue to be mindful of special education regulations regarding child find.

In addition, despite the existence of these programs and related supports geared toward social emotional challenges, parents are unclear regarding such services. Forty-one percent are neutral or did not respond regarding their satisfaction with the social emotional support their child receives, thirty-two percent agree they are satisfied, twenty-seven percent disagree. It is recommended the Guidance Department provide information on social emotional services at Manchester Essex High School as well as course information to ensure parents are aware of available supports.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Teachers across grades at the high school report although they have had disability training, it would be beneficial to be briefed on the students coming the following year, specifically, how their disabilities will manifest in the classroom and what strategies will be useful. It is recommended that department heads work with special education liaisons and administrators to determine and provide, in advance, the training teachers will need to work effectively with new caseloads.

During focus groups it became evident that some general educators are not aware of special education regulations around timelines, roles, and responsibilities. It is recommended the district provide a workshop on special education legal issues for all high school staff and include this topic in teacher orientation annually. A summary of civil rights law and litigation would provide teachers with a comprehensive view of special education laws governing school districts.

Manchester- Essex is rightfully viewed as a high performing district with a tremendous amount of focus put on grades and the grade point average. Special education staff expressed concerns over focus on grades and the willingness of general educators to modify grades as stated in IEPs. Questions such as: Should the level of support students receive equate to high grades; how can a child fail if they are in special education; and why do parents see a "C" grade as not good enough, came up frequently in focus groups.

This too, is an issue that surfaces across districts. It is recommended that the high school staff engage in a conversation around regulations and review district practices regarding grading. Often, teachers need to better understand regulations and IEP documentation of modifications and specialized instruction in order to give themselves "permission" to modify grades.

Many schools and districts are making the transition to competency-based evaluation to create a more equitable system that gives all students the skills they need for postsecondary life. Competency-based systems of assessment provide ongoing opportunities for students to develop a growth mindset. As the district studies the grading issue, a look at competencies rather than skills is recommended.

Manchester Essex High School is to be applauded for the development of a college task force comprised of the principal, guidance counselors, students and parents. The task force meets four times per year with college representatives from higher institutions such as Tufts, Colgate, and Northeastern. The aim is to ensure Manchester Essex is supporting students in a way that will meet their needs in higher education. It is recommended the task force consider inviting representatives from colleges offering supports for students with disabilities as a means to ensure all Manchester Essex high school students are prepared for higher education.

SUMMARY

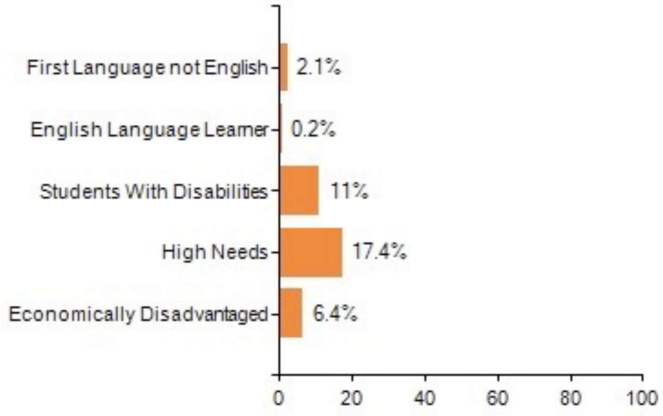
The best way to summarize this report is perhaps to say that if asked in the future where special education is working, I will recommend Manchester Essex High School. Overall, staff are collaborative, engaged, and committed to students with disabilities. Many, many positives exist in both the general education and special education setting. The principal is acutely aware of challenges that exist and reports they are already being studied. The director of student services has supported development and maintenance

of excellent programming options for students with disabilities. Staff demonstrate the strengths and knowledge needed for their respective roles.
The Manchester Essex Regional High School superintendent and Director of Student Services are to be commended for engaging in this review of special education programs and services and striving for continuous improvement.

EDCO is grateful for the opportunity to review special education programming at the high school. Thanks to all of the parents, staff, administrators and especially the students for the open and honest dialogue and participation in the process. It has been a pleasure to speak with and observe the many fine and committed professionals and support staff in the district.

APPENDIX A
Manchester Essex Regional High School Data:
(http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/general/general.aspx?topNavID=1&leftNavId=100&orgcode=06980510&orgtypecode=6)

Selected Populations at Manchester Essex Regional High School (2018)



Comparison of Manchester-Essex Regional High School MCAS Scores – Proficient of Higher - to Similar Districts (Legacy Data)

School(s) details

Manchester Essex Regional-Manchester Essex Regional High School - 2016 School Assistance Level - Level 1

Comparable Schools Overview

*Schools most similar to your school in terms of grades span,total enrollment,and special populations.
Orange-Shaded row: Your School Blue-Shaded row: Highest performing of the other 10 schools (based on 2016 data).

School Name	2016-17 October Enrollment				2016 MCAS % Proficient or Higher			2016 Median Student Growth Percentile	
	Total Enrollment #	Eco. Dis. %	SWD %	ELL %	ELA %	Math %	Science %	ELA	Math
Georgetown-Georgetown High School*	411	10.2	13.6	0.0	98%	92%	89%	54.5	72.5
Ipswich-Ipswich High*	543	9.0	12.3	0.9	98%	88%	84%	56.0	42.0
Leicester-Leicester High*	455	19.3	12.3	1.5	96%	77%	85%	45.5	42.0
Lunenburg-Lunenburg High*	439	14.1	12.5	1.4	92%	76%	73%	53.0	40.0
Manchester Essex Regional-Manchester Essex Regional High School*	424	8.0	9.7	0.9	100%	97%	95%	61.0	63.0
Mendon-Upton-Nipmuc Regional High*	593	10.3	12.5	0.2	97%	92%	95%	67.0	61.0
Millis-Millis High School*	390	9.7	11.0	0.5	98%	93%	82%	57.0	39.5
Newburyport-Newburyport High*	779	10.5	10.4	0.6	98%	91%	93%	59.5	69.0
Pentucket-Pentucket Regional Sr High*	734	8.7	11.3	0.1	97%	87%	88%	51.0	54.5
Sutton-Sutton High School*	426	7.0	10.8	0.0	92%	80%	77%	55.0	53.5
Tyngsborough-Tyngsborough High School*	507	9.1	8.9	0.8	98%	94%	93%	47.0	57.0

Focus Group Protocol

Focus Group: **Date:**
Attendees/Roles/Responsibilities:
Primary questions:

- What do you believe your school does exceptionally well in delivering special education services to students with disabilities?
- What do you believe should change or be improved in the delivery of special education services?

Specific Areas to discuss:

- Communication - gen. ed., sped, related svc. providers, parents
  - Time for communication?
  - Support for gen educators in disability awareness, other special ed. topics?
  - Co-teaching model
- Teaching Assistants
  - Trained?
  - Effectively assigned/utilized?
- Pre-referral Process
  - RTI utilized?
  - Documentation
- Team Process
  - Eligibility Determination
  - IEP Development
  - Goals and objectives aligned with need and curriculum?
  - Services provided as written?
  - How are general education teachers / learning assistants made aware of IEP?
  - Are accommodations provided throughout settings?
- How is progress monitored?
- Is progress reported using data?
- Specialized programming
  - Adequate methodologies to meet unique needs?
  - Adequate programming?
  - Vertical alignment of curriculum?
  - Methodologies?
- Parent involvement
  - Parents encouraged to participate?
  - District responsive to parents?
  - District recommendations valued?
  - Education offered for parents?
- Professional learning opportunities:
  - Who has access?
  - Topics?

High School Parent Satisfaction Survey Results

22 responded to the survey

Respondents by child's grade:
9 Grade 9
6 Grade 10
2 Grade 11
1 Grade 12
1 Out of District
2 Other

Respondents by specialized program:
3 SWING Students with Integrated Goals
3 Transitions Program

Respondents by child's disability:
4 Autism
1 Communication
3 Developmental Delay
1 Emotional
3 Health
0 Intellectual Impairment
3 Neurological
10 Specific Learning Disability
1 not sure

If your child was found eligible by MANCHESTER ESSEX REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT, in what grade level?
5 PK
3 K-2
4 3-5
6 Middle School
2 High School

Evaluations are thorough and comprehensive.
13.6% strongly agree
54.5% agree
22.7% neutral
4.5% disagree
4.5% strongly disagree
0% n/a

Evaluations accurately reflect my child's needs.
18.2% strongly agree
45.5% agree
18.2% neutral
13.6% disagree
4.5% strongly disagree
0% n/a

Evaluations include specific recommendations.
18.2% strongly agree
54.5% agree
18.2% neutral
4.5% disagree
9.1% strongly disagree
0% n/a

Evaluation results are communicated in a clear manner that helps me understand my child's disability and learning needs.
18.2% strongly agree
54.5% agree
13.6% neutral
13.6% disagree
4.5% strongly disagree
0% n/a

General education teachers are made aware of evaluation results.
4.5% strongly agree
31.8% agree
27.3% neutral
22.7% disagree
9.1% strongly disagree
9.1% n/a

I am invited to a Team meeting at least once per year.
50% strongly agree
45.5% agree
0% neutral
0% disagree
4.5% strongly disagree
0% n/a

My concerns and requests are documented on the IEP or in the IEP cover letter.
28.6% strongly agree
61.9% agree
4.8% neutral
4.8% disagree
0% strongly disagree
0% n/a

The IEP accurately reflects the TEAM's discussion.
31.8% strongly agree
40.9% agree
22.7% neutral
0% disagree
4.5% strongly disagree
0% n/a

The IEP states how progress towards goals and objectives will be measured.
27.3% strongly agree
50% agree
13.6% neutral
4.5% disagree
4.5% strongly disagree
0% n/a

A variety of methodologies are available for consideration during the IEP development process.
19% strongly agree
42.9% agree
19% neutral
9.5% disagree
9.5% strongly disagree
0% n/a

Services and supports are provided as documented in the IEP
28.6% strongly agree
33.3% agree
23.8% neutral
4.8% disagree
9.5% strongly disagree
0% n/a

My child is making progress on the goals on the IEP
18.2% strongly agree
50% agree
13.6% neutral
18.2% disagree
4.5% strongly disagree
0% n/a

I receive progress update with enough frequency to keep me informed.
13.6% strongly agree
50% agree
18.2% neutral
13.6% disagree
4.5% strongly disagree
0% n/a

The district provides information on parents' rights with regard to the Team process.
36.4% strongly agree
45.5% agree
9.1% neutral
4.5% disagree
9.1% strongly disagree
0% n/a

I feel that I am an equal partner in planning my child's individual education program.
27.3% strongly agree
45.5% agree
13.6% neutral
4.5% disagree
9.1% strongly disagree
0% n/a

Teachers and administrators interact with me in a professional manner.
45.5% strongly agree
50% agree
0% neutral
0% disagree
4.5% strongly disagree
0% n/a

I am encouraged by teachers and administrators to participate in decision-making.
18.2% strongly agree
50% agree
18.2% neutral
9.1% disagree
4.5% strongly disagree
0% n/a

District staff are available and accessible.
31.8% strongly agree
54.5% agree
9.1% neutral
0% disagree
4.5% strongly disagree
0% n/a

Communication from district staff is appropriate and frequently enough to keep me informed.
13.6% strongly agree
54.5% agree
18.2% neutral
9.1% disagree
4.5% strongly disagree
0% n/a

The district offers education about issues relevant to students and families with disabilities.
13.6% strongly agree
45.5% agree
31.8% neutral
4.5% disagree
4.5% strongly disagree
0% n/a

The special education teachers make accommodations and modifications as documented in the IEP.
31.8% strongly agree
50% agree
4.5% neutral
0% disagree
9.1% strongly disagree
4.5% n/a

General education teachers are aware of my child's disability and related needs and provide accommodations and modifications as documented in the IEP.
13.6% strongly agree
31.8% agree
22.7% neutral
18.2% disagree
9.1% strongly disagree
9.1% n/a

General education and special education teachers collaborate to ensure the IEP is implemented.
4.5% strongly agree
40.9% agree
31.8% neutral
13.6% disagree
9.1% strongly disagree
9.1% n/a

General education teachers demonstrate their understanding of my child's disability and related needs.
13.6% strongly agree
18.2% agree
40.9% neutral
18.2% disagree
4.5% strongly disagree
9.1% n/a

Related service providers (speech/language, PT, OT, etc.) demonstrate that they understand my child's disability and related needs.
9.1% strongly agree
40.9% agree
4.5% neutral
4.5% disagree
4.5% strongly disagree
36.4% n/a

I am satisfied with the amount of services my child receives from related service providers.
9.1% strongly agree
54.5% agree
13.6% neutral
4.5% disagree
13.6% strongly disagree
4.5% n/a

I am satisfied with social-emotional support my child receives.
9.1% strongly agree
22.7% agree
36.4% neutral
13.6% disagree
13.6% strongly disagree
4.5% n/a

MERHS ensures that students with disabilities are provided with options for after school and extra curricular activities.
9.1% strongly agree
18.2% agree
31.8% neutral
9.1% disagree
13.6% strongly disagree
18.2% n/a

MERHS ensures that students with disabilities after-school and extra-curricular activities are accessible to students with disabilities.
9.1% strongly agree
18.2% agree
22.7% neutral
18.2% disagree
9.1% strongly disagree
27.3% n/a

Overall, I am happy with the special education services my child receives.
13.6% strongly agree
50% agree
18.2% neutral
9.1% disagree
9.1% strongly disagree
0% n/a

Overall, my child is happy at school.
22.7% strongly agree
31.8% agree
18.2% neutral
9.1% disagree
18.2% strongly disagree
0% n/a

High School Staff Satisfaction Survey Results

19 responded to the survey:

Respondents by Role:

0	Administrator
10	General Education Teacher
1	Special Education Teacher in specialized program
3	Special Education Teacher
1	Related Service Provider
0	Teaching Assistant
1	Support Staff
2	Other

Respondents by Content Area:

4	English Language Arts
5	Mathematics
6	Science
1	Social Studies
0	Music
1	Arts
0	Physical Education
0	Health
8	Other

There is sufficient communication between general education and special education staff about the needs and progress of students with disabilities.

26.3% strongly agree
57.9% agree
10.5% neutral
5.3% disagree
0% strongly disagree
0% n/a

There is sufficient communication between general education and related services staff (SLP, OT, PT, Bridge Staff, School Adjustment, etc.) about the needs and progress of students with disabilities.

21.1% strongly agree
63.2% agree
5.3% neutral
5.3% disagree
0% strongly disagree
5.3% n/a

Adequate time is available for general and special education teachers to collaborate in planning and delivering instruction students with disabilities.
0% strongly agree
11.1% agree
27.8% neutral
50% disagree
11.1% strongly disagree
0% n/a

My Department Chair ensures that I have sufficient information and strategies to work with students with disabilities in my classes.
15.8% strongly agree
42.1% agree
26.3% neutral
5.3% disagree
5.3% strongly disagree
10.5% n/a

My Department Chair models effective content area practices for working with students with disabilities.
26.3% strongly agree
26.3% agree
15.8% neutral
0% disagree
5.3% strongly disagree
26.3% n/a

General education teachers are provided with sufficient information and support for helping students with disabilities in their classrooms.
5.3% strongly agree
63.2% agree
10.5% neutral
5.3% disagree
5.3% strongly disagree
10.5% n/a

I receive the support I need from my Department Chair when facing challenges related to teaching or serving students with disabilities.
36.8% strongly agree
36.8% agree
5.3% neutral
5.3% disagree
5.3% strongly disagree
10.5% n/a

I receive the support I need from the HS Chairperson when facing challenges related to teaching or serving students with disabilities.
31.6% strongly agree
26.3% agree
10.5% neutral
0% disagree
5.3% strongly disagree
26.3% n/a

I receive the support I need from the Student Services Director when facing challenges related to teaching or serving students with disabilities.
15.8% strongly agree
42.1% agree
21.1% neutral
0% disagree
0% strongly disagree
21.1% n/a

I receive the support I need from the Principal when facing challenges related to teaching or serving students with disabilities.
26.3% strongly agree
52.6% agree
10.5% neutral
0% disagree
0% strongly disagree
10.5% n/a

Teaching Assistants are effectively assigned in order to support the learning and progress of students with disabilities.
35.3% strongly agree
35.3% agree
0% neutral
5.9% disagree
5.9% strongly disagree
17.6% n/a

Teaching Assistants are effectively utilized to support the learning and progress of students with disabilities.
27.8% strongly agree
50% agree
0% neutral
5.6% disagree
5.6% strongly disagree
11.1% n/a

The Teaching Assistants I work with are sufficiently trained to provide instruction support to students with special needs
33.3% strongly agree
33.3% agree
11.1% neutral
0% disagree
5.6% strongly disagree
16.7% n/a

Adequate training has been provided to ensure co-teaching is effective.
8.3% strongly agree
8.3% agree
16.7% neutral
50% disagree
0% strongly disagree
16.7% n/a

The co-teaching model I am engaged in is effective and beneficial for both general education students and students with disabilities.
23.1% strongly agree
38.5% agree
15.4% neutral
7.7% disagree
0% strongly disagree
15.4% n/a

Other staff comments / concerns regarding the co-teaching model:

- ✓ The co-teaching model I am engaged in is effective and beneficial for both general education students and students with disabilities.
- ✓ I have minimal consistent planning / prep time with my co-teacher as our prep times do not align.
- ✓ Co-planning time has been quite challenging to organize. We have had a few very great meetings and frequently check in with each other, but I would always love more time!

Our school makes every attempt to meet the unique needs of students through the TAT process before a district referral to special education is made.
15.8% strongly agree
47.4 agree
26.3% neutral
0% disagree
0% strongly disagree
10.5% n/a

The TAT process is clearly defined: i.e., contact person, process, follow-up procedures.
15.8% strongly agree
36.8% agree
26.3% neutral
10.5% disagree
0% strongly disagree
10.5% n/a

The TAT Team provides helpful and appropriate interventions prior to referral.
16.7% strongly agree
27.8% agree
38.9% neutral
5.6% disagree
0% strongly disagree
11.1% n/a

The TAT Team provides reasonable follow-up following interventions.
5.6% strongly agree
38.9% agree
38.9% neutral
5.6% disagree
0% strongly disagree
11.1% n/a

The evaluations conducted through the special education process are sufficiently comprehensive to identify students' specific strengths and needs.
42.1% strongly agree
47.4% agree
0% neutral
0% disagree
0% strongly disagree
10.5% n/a

The results of special education evaluations are shared with me in ways that provide meaningful insights into students' educational needs.
26.3% strongly agree
47.4% agree
21.1% neutral
0% disagree
0% strongly disagree
5.3% n/a

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) process in the school involves general and special education teachers as equal partners in making recommendations.
21.1% strongly agree
42.1% agree
26.3% neutral
0% disagree
5.3% strongly disagree
10.5% n/a

The special education accommodations identified in my students' IEPs are developed collaboratively between general and special education teachers.
21.1% strongly agree
31.6% agree
26.3% neutral
10.5% disagree
5.3% strongly disagree
5.3% n/a

The special education accommodations identified in my students' IEPs are consistently delivered by general education teachers.
10.5% strongly agree
52.6% agree
21.1% neutral
0% disagree
0% strongly disagree
15.8% n/a

My students' IEP goals and objectives promote skills that align with the Massachusetts curriculum standards.
26.3% strongly agree
63.2% agree
0% neutral
0% disagree
0% strongly disagree
10.5% n/a

The special education services identified in my students' IEPs are consistently provided by special education.
42.1% strongly agree
52.6% agree
0% neutral
0% disagree
0% strongly disagree
5.3% n/a

There is a consistent approach to progress monitoring in my school – there is a schedule and methods/tools for monitoring the progress of students with disabilities.
10.5% strongly agree
57.9% agree
21.1% neutral
5.3% disagree
0% strongly disagree
5.3% n/a

General and special education teachers have a toolkit of progress monitoring tools and training in how to use them.
11.1% strongly agree
38.9% agree
33.3% neutral
16.7% disagree
0% strongly disagree
0% n/a

The school's report card (or other progress report) effectively communicates the progress of students with disabilities.
15.8% strongly agree
31.6% agree
42.1% neutral
10.5% disagree
0% strongly disagree
5.3% n/a

The Team considers the least restrictive environment in making recommendations for special education services.
26.3% strongly agree
47.4% agree
5.3% neutral
5.3% disagree
0% strongly disagree
15.8% n/a

There are sufficient specialized programs at MERHS to meet the needs of all students.
21.1% strongly agree
36.8% agree
21.1% neutral
26.3% disagree
0% strongly disagree
0% n/a

Students in specialized programs are taught strategies to promote independence and facilitate movement to a lesser restrictive setting.
21.1% strongly agree
52.6% agree
26.3% neutral
0% disagree
0% strongly disagree
0% n/a

Parents are given the opportunity to participate as partners in evaluating their child's needs.
47.4% strongly agree
42.1% agree
0% neutral
0% disagree
0% strongly disagree
10.5% n/a

Parents are encouraged to participate in making decisions about their children's educational programs and services.
47.4% strongly agree
42.1% agree
0% neutral
0% disagree
0% strongly disagree
10.5% n/a

The school effectively responds to the needs and concerns of parents of children with disabilities.
52.6% strongly agree
31.6% agree
5.3% neutral
0% disagree
0% strongly disagree
10.5% n/a

My professional recommendations are valued by parents and family members.
38.9% strongly agree
44.4% agree
11.1% neutral
5.6% disagree
0% strongly disagree
0% n/a

Students with disabilities in the inclusion setting receive a benefit from interacting with and modeling typical peers.
36.8% strongly agree
52.6% agree
5.3% neutral
5.3% disagree
0% strongly disagree
0% n/a

Students with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in school-sponsored activities such as field trips, extracurricular activities, and sporting events.
36.8% strongly agree
57.9% agree
5.3% neutral
0% disagree
0% strongly disagree
0% n/a

Teachers at MERHS have expectations that are too high for students with disabilities.
5.3% strongly agree
15.8% agree
36.8% neutral
15.8% disagree
21.1% strongly disagree
5.3% n/a

Teachers at MERHS have reduced expectations for students with disabilities.
0% strongly agree
26.3% agree
26.3% neutral
26.3% disagree
15.8% strongly disagree
5.3%n/a

There is sufficient communication and collaboration among general and special education teachers and parents to help special education students make an effective transition into grade 9 at MERHS.
10.5% strongly agree
36.8% agree
31.6% neutral
10.5% disagree
10.5% strongly disagree
0% n/a

The district provides sufficient professional learning options related to meeting the needs of students with disabilities.
10.5% strongly agree
52.6% agree
31.6% neutral
5.3% disagree
0% strongly disagree
0% n/a

The district provides useful professional development related to meeting the needs of special education students.
10.5% strongly agree
63.2% agree
26.3% neutral
0% disagree
0% strongly disagree
0% n/a

General education teachers need more focused professional development on how disabilities are manifested in the classroom.
10.5% strongly agree
63.2% agree
15.8% neutral
10.5% disagree
0% strongly disagree
0% n/a

Overall, I believe MERHS delivers high quality education programs and services for students with disabilities in my school.
26.3% strongly agree
68.4% agree
5.3% neutral
0% disagree
0% strongly disagree
0% n/a

Overall, I feel MANCHESTER ESSEX REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL is meeting the needs of students with disabilities in the district.
31.6% strongly agree
63.2% agree
5.3% neutral
0% disagree
0% strongly disagree
0% n/a

APPENDIX B

Excerpts from the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Quick Reference Guide distributed by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education:

Student Support Teams (SSTs): To successfully implement a tiered system of support, schools must cultivate a collaborative school culture in which all staff take responsibility for the success of all students. As part of this collaborative culture, it is important that staff have time, a place, and a process for engaging in collaborative problem-solving. This Quick Reference Guide outlines how Student Support Teams (SSTs) can be used to encourage such collaboration among staff to ensure that all students are having all their needs met in safe and supportive learning environments and are able to be successful in and out of school.

What is a Student Support Team? Also known as Intervention Teams, School-based Problem Solving Teams, or Child Study Teams, Student Support Teams (SSTs) are a formalized structure for a group of educators, administrators, and other staff to meet regularly to address concerns about individual students or groups of students. SSTs are designed to support students both by anticipating and preventing issues before they occur and by providing interventions and/or resources when issues do arise. At the same time, SSTs support staff members by introducing teachers who bring an issue to the team to new strategies and building their capacity to support a wide range of students; teachers are able to generalize successful new strategies beyond the SST process to meet the needs of other students in their classrooms, including struggling students and students who have already mastered the content being taught. Often, SSTs are also responsible for academic and non-academic whole-school initiatives, particularly those related to positive school culture and climate and academic tiered systems of supports.

Who should be on a Student Support Team?
SSTs provide a vehicle for staff from across the school community to engage in a team approach to problem-solving. there should be a core group of staff that attends regularly scheduled meetings. Below is an example of the core members of one Massachusetts district's SST, as well as the staff who are often asked to attend a meeting based on a particular student or group of students' needs:

Core SST Members
•Principal or other building administrator
•General education teacher(s)
•Special education team chair and/or special education teacher(s)
•Interventionists
•Guidance counselor or school psychologist
•Related service providers (e.g. Speech-Language Pathologist)
•School social worker
•Family member or legal guardian of student(s)

Additional Members
•ESL teacher
•School nurse
•Subject area and/or reading specialist(s)
•Department Head and/or grade level chair
•Central office personnel
•504 Coordinator
•Personnel from state agencies or community organizations (e.g. DCF; Boys and Girls Club)
•Student(s) (generally secondary)
•Translator

Student Support Team: Tools and Resources

- District of Columbia Public Schools SST Manual: http://www.dcsig.org/sstresources.htm
- National School Reform Faculty – Materials and Protocols: http://www.nsrfharmony.org/protocol/a_z.html
- San Francisco Unified School District Sample SST Forms: http://www.healthiersf.org/Forms/index.php#sst
- Student Support Center: http://www.studentsupportcenter.org/services/SST.shtml