

## **NVSD 44 - Parents of Students with Autism Survey - Summary Report October 2013**

### **Introduction**

The parents of 189 students identified in the Special Education Category for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) were surveyed in May 2013. There was a 38% response rate, with an even distribution across all grades from Kindergarten to grade 12. Survey outcomes revealed helpful information to assist with prioritizing recommendations for future planning and development.

### **Survey Outcomes**

72% of parents reported being satisfied with the quality of their child's education and 83% reported feeling their child is welcomed at school. 70% of parents felt their child's program focused on what their child needed although a few commented on how they felt their child was "ostracized by their peer group and/or the staff/other parents ..... a burden to the school." As one parent pointed out, "depending on the school, teacher(s) and Education Assistants (EAs) relationships, the survey responses would change for better or worse." *Relationships are key in creating an inclusive environment.*

The majority of parents reported being satisfied with school arrangements. 72% feel their child's teachers collaborate well. One parent reported that while the classroom teacher and peers were great, the employment of EAs based on seniority, poor EA attendance rates and not having a special education teacher who was in the school each day, were concerns. 67% of parents reported feeling that EAs had the necessary knowledge and skills regarding ASD but only 45% felt that their child's classroom teachers have such knowledge and skills. *There appears to be a need to enhance the clarity and shared understanding about the necessary staff knowledge and skills.*

The majority of parents reported being satisfied with the Individual Education Plan (IEP) consultation arrangements. 85% of parents reported they were meaningfully involved and 63% reported their child's IEP goals are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timed). A few comments revealed perceived differences for some high school students: "I was frustrated at how long it has taken to put together an adequate IEP.... teachers weren't informed he had autism— and they had not read his IEP." *We need to ensure parents and all staff understand the appropriate timelines, and communication needs.*

Most parents were satisfied with their child's progress. While the majority of parents were satisfied with their child's reading (70%), writing (63%) and mathematics progress (65%), only half were satisfied with progress with language, life skills, behaviour and social skills progress. Students with more complex autism likely require ongoing social behavior and therapist (speech and language, occupational/physiotherapy) intervention. There was variability in the responses to questions related to accessing such services. *There is a need to communicate about and plan for appropriate specialist involvement.*

### **Recommendations**

The District continues to promote consistency and best practices among all schools, through the processes of staff and school development. This will need to include interdisciplinary working with a focus on social, behavioral and life skills for students with complex autism. An annual survey of parents could be undertaken through the District Parent Advisory Council.