

# Educational Perspectives Survey

Last fall the Indiana Department of Education sponsored a survey regarding attitudes towards educating students with disabilities in inclusive settings. We asked Indiana educators and families their personal views about the desirability and feasibility of students with disabilities being included in the general education setting. The results suggest that across Indiana, Hoosiers are very optimistic overall about inclusive practices and the potential for students with disabilities to achieve alongside same age peers. Concerns were raised about how effective implementation can be achieved through practices and resources, and the degree to which the achievement gaps between students with and without disabilities can be addressed. Moving forward, this survey will be sent out annually in October.

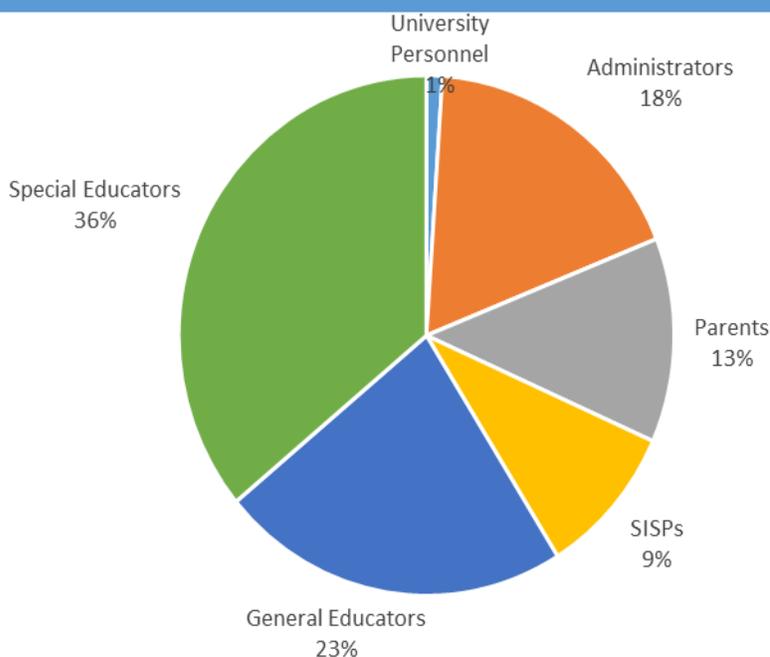
The purpose of this survey is to see if there is a shift in attitudes and beliefs over time in providing equitable access to students with disabilities in general education settings. The information from the first survey will provide baseline data in order to measure our work. Thank you to those that took the survey! For more info about the survey or results please contact Brandon Myers at [bmyers@doe.in.gov](mailto:bmyers@doe.in.gov).



## Who took the survey?

Any adult who works directly with students with disabilities or who oversees programs relating to students with disabilities was asked to complete this survey. This included parents, special education teachers, general and related arts education teachers, related services providers and librarians (known as Specialized Instructional Support Personnel or SISPs), administrators, and university personnel. One-thousand eight hundred people responded (1,800) to the survey across the state, with around 100 fulfilling more than one role.

## Who Took the Survey?



## What did the survey cover?

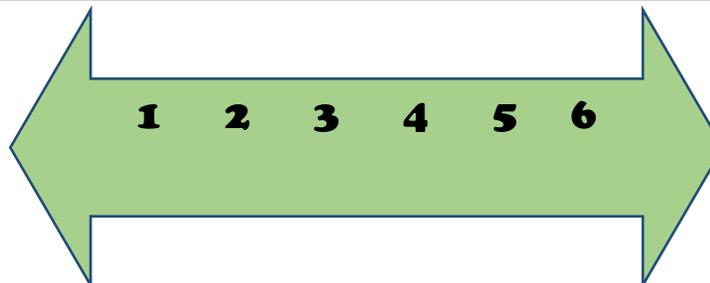
A team of educators designed the survey, which consists of thirty-seven (37) statements identifying opportunities and challenges to inclusive practices. The questions regard the whole spectrum of inclusive practices, including:

- personal beliefs about appropriateness and effectiveness of inclusive practice to deliver grade-level standards-based instruction the academic potential of students with disabilities
- the effect of inclusive practices on students without disabilities
- issues of classroom behavior in inclusive settings
- the preparedness of general education teachers to work effectively with students with disabilities
- the preparedness of special education teachers to teach grade-level standards
- the attitudes of teachers towards the effectiveness and appropriateness of inclusive practices
- the nature of the general education-special education teacher working relationship
- the role of related services and other school personnel
- the current and potential resources of schools to effectively deliver inclusive instruction

**How does this relate to your district? School? Classroom?  
What is your vision for students in inclusive settings?**

For each question, our respondents indicated their level of agreement with a statement on a scale ranging from 1 to 6. Based on this, we can identify what the greatest challenges and opportunities are to moving toward more inclusive practices. A '1' indicated the issue covered in the statement offered a high barrier to inclusive practices, whereas a '6' indicated the highest promise of students succeeding in inclusive settings within the least restrictive environment.

**Challenges to Inclusive Practices**



**Opportunities for Full Implementation of Inclusive Practices**

This wide coverage of topics enables us to identify the largest challenges and opportunities to developing and sustaining inclusive instructional practices. Many respondents appreciated the wide-range of topics, but noted that inclusion should be seen on an individual basis for each student, commenting that the entire population receiving special education services should not be seen as monolithic, with a number of respondents specifically mentioning those students with significant cognitive disabilities.

# What are the highest opportunities and largest challenges that educators face in trying to design instructional systems that would best serve all learners?

### The top five survey items identifying the most promising opportunities were:

- Special education and general education teachers should collaborate on all students' learning needs in the general education classroom.
- Students with disabilities can be successful in general education classrooms.
- Students with disabilities have a basic right to receive their education in the general education classroom.
- Students with disabilities develop social skills when included in general education classrooms.
- General education peers are accepting of students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

### How to take advantage of these opportunities

- Schedule meetings that include general education and special education staff and follow a set agenda that includes review of student progress as measured with formative and interim assessments and upcoming standards to be addressed
- Collaborate on strategies to support each and every student utilizing the strengths of both teachers
- Include students with disabilities in both educational and extracurricular activities
- Structure opportunities that allow all students to participate in social situations and provide support and instruction as necessary
- Utilize peer assisted learning strategies to benefit all students academically and socially

### Meanwhile, our survey respondents saw the following as the biggest obstacles:

- There are insufficient resources to support the successful inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms.
- Students with disabilities need more attention and assistance than general education can provide.
- The organizational and study skills of students with disabilities are inadequate for success in the general education classroom.
- General education teachers prefer that students with disabilities receive special education services outside of the general education classroom.
- The allocation of special education resources into the general education classroom increases the instructional load of the general education teacher.

### How to work around the barriers

- Consider creative ways to group students based on need, rather than disability
- Review staff schedules and identify areas of overlap or underutilization
- Establish a peer support program
- Provide ongoing professional development and coaching for general education and special education teachers
- Establish clear procedures and provide tools for students that support study and organizational tasks
- Utilize all staff members to meet the needs of all learners creating a sense of shared responsibility
- Provide collaboration time for general and special educators

Thank you to the following Indiana Resource Network centers for collaboration on this project:

**Indiana Center for Teacher Quality**, <https://ictq.indiana.edu/>

**Indiana IEP Resource Center**, <https://www.indianaieprc.org/>

**PATINS Project**, <http://www.patinsproject.com/>

**Project SUCCESS**, <http://www.projectsuccessindiana.com/>



## What did we learn from the survey?

Most of our respondents were positive toward the possibilities and potential effectiveness of inclusive classrooms.

Over 94% of our respondents saw more opportunities than barriers to moving toward a comprehensive inclusion model.

Thirty-one of the 37 (84%) statements averaged responses indicating more promise than impediments.

Sixty-three (63) percent of all respondents saw fewer barriers to inclusion.

The role that a person fulfilled in working with students with disabilities did influence their perspectives, although differences were relatively small.

Every group saw more opportunities than challenges to a globally-inclusive school setting with administrators registered the highest expectations.

Related arts teachers and general education teachers registered the highest challenges of the groups.

Special education teachers, who made up almost half of all the respondents on the survey, were matched by university personnel, related services providers and parents as being about the same as the overall average. The graph shows the average answer on the 1 to 6 scale by group.

This graph shows the average response by each of the groups in the survey with a score of 1 representing a perception of high challenges and 6 representing the most opportunities.

