



Impact of Boundary Changes in Alpine District Small Group Elementary Classes

Prepared by

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With SpedEx Parents Group

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Mission Statement

SPED parents and families together . . .

Building Community: Building a community of safety and inclusion within our community and schools

Supporting Teams: Supporting teachers and IEP teams to ensure that every child has the needed resources and support to achieve their greatest potential

Advocating FAPE: Amplifying our collective voices to advocate at a district and state level for positive changes to ensure an inclusive, stable, free and public education for all students

Collaborating for Change: Collaborating with school districts and the community to create belonging, love, inclusion, and personal progression

Key Study Findings

- Elementary students in small group special education classes are 10.9x more likely to experience a boundary change between grades than their siblings are in the same home. This difference is statistically significant ($p < .001$).
- Parents were 3.3x more likely to report that boundary changes negatively affected the education of their students in small group classes compared to their children in general education classes. This difference is statistically significant ($p < .001$).
- While these statistics are powerful, comments from parents detail the incredible toll that constant boundary changes on the education and stability of children in small group special elementary classes.



Study Questions

- **Title:** Alpine School District Boundary Changes for Elementary Students in Small Group Special Education Class as Part of a General Education School
- **Instructions:** This questionnaire is meant for parents of children in the Alpine school district who have at least one child that meets the following criteria:
 - -Attended elementary school as part of a small group special education (life skills) class
 - -The above student(s) have or had an IEP (individualized education plan)
 - -The above student(s) attended this small group class in a general education elementary school (other mainstream classes in the school)
 - -Attended in the past five years
- Please define a boundary change as a district placement that resulted in a child moving to a new school or your child becoming an out-of-boundary student.

Study Questions (Continued)

- **Q1:** How many children do you have who have recently attended small group special education in the Alpine School District?
- **Q2:** What is the total combined number of years your children in special education classes have attended elementary school in Alpine School District? [Example: For two children attending for 2 and 4 years the total would 6 years.]
- **Q3:** What is the total combined number of school boundary/location changes have these children (in special education) have experienced in elementary school as part of reassignments by the district? [Example 1; Two children both experiencing the same boundary change is two combined changes. Example 2: Moves for students changing schools as part of a family home move should not be counted.]
- **Q4:** Do you feel that the quality of the education of your students in special education classes has been negatively impacted by boundary/school changes?
- **Q5:** Please share any comments about boundary/school changes your children have experienced or notes about your responses.

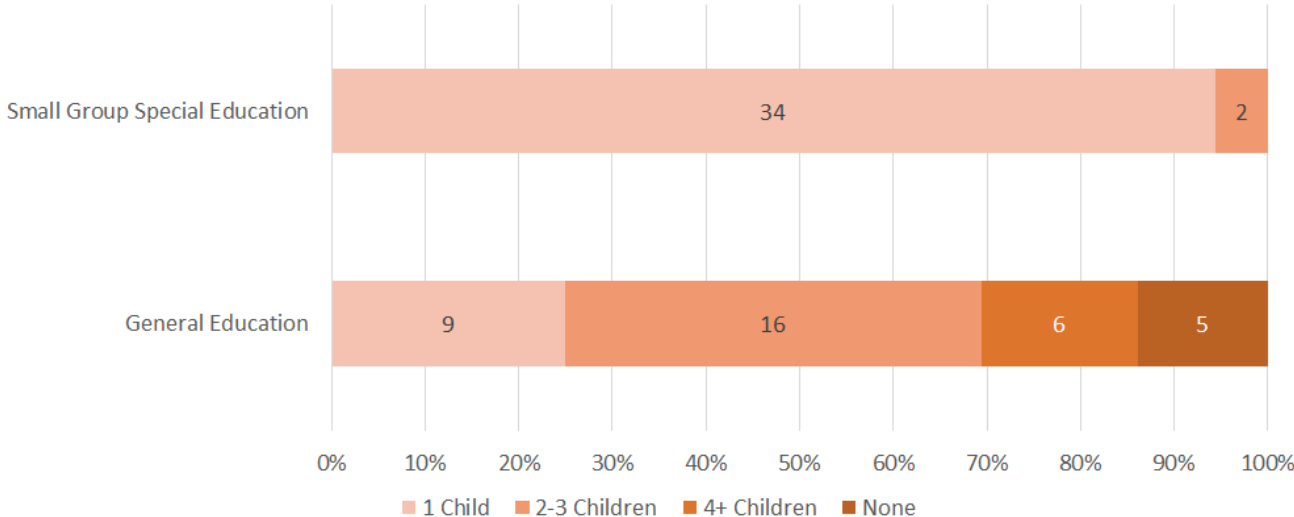
Study Questions (Continued)

- **Section 2 Instructions: Beyond the experience of your student(s) in the special education class, we would like to know the similar experiences of your students (if any) in general education classes.**
- **Q1:** How many children do you have who have recently attended elementary general education (non-special education) classes in the Alpine School District? (If none skip to next section.)
- **Q2:** What is the total combined number of years your children in General Education (non-special education) classes have attended elementary school in Alpine School District? [Example: For two children attending for 2 and 4 years the total would 6 years.]
- **Q3:** What is the total combined number of school boundary/location changes have these children (in general education) have experienced in elementary school as part of reassignments by the district? [Example 1; Two children both experiencing the same boundary change is two combined changes. Example 2: Moves for students changing schools as part of a family home move should not be counted.]
- **Q4:** Do you feel that the quality of the education of your students in General Education classes has been negatively impacted by boundary/school changes?
- **Q5:** Please share any comments about boundary/school changes your children have experienced or notes about your responses.

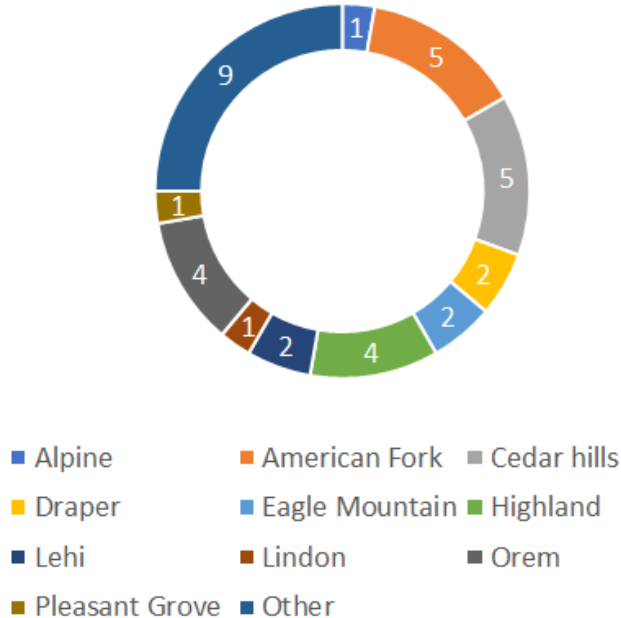
Survey Participants

- 36 families with 38 total children in small group special education classes and 77 children in general education classes
- 31 families have students in both classroom types

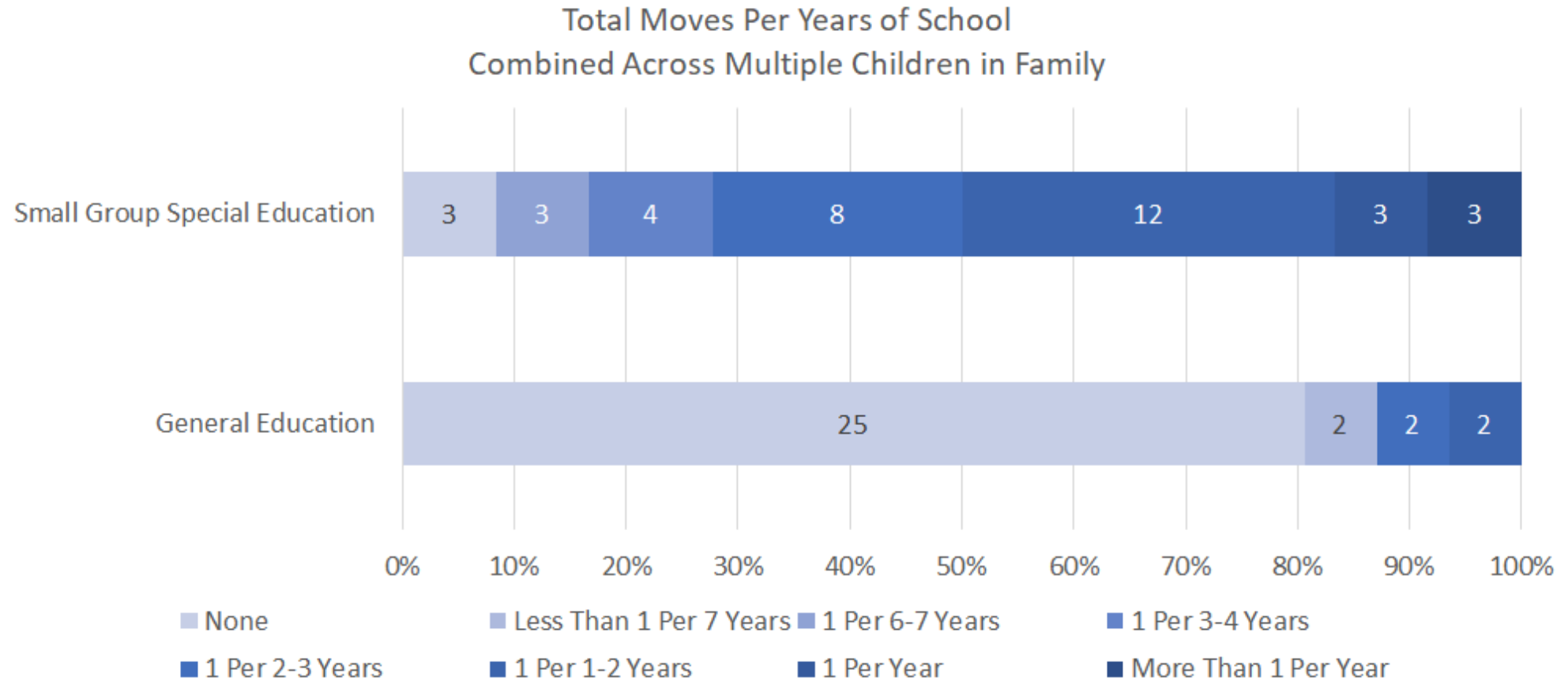
Total Children in Family by Classroom Type



Respondent Families Location of Residence



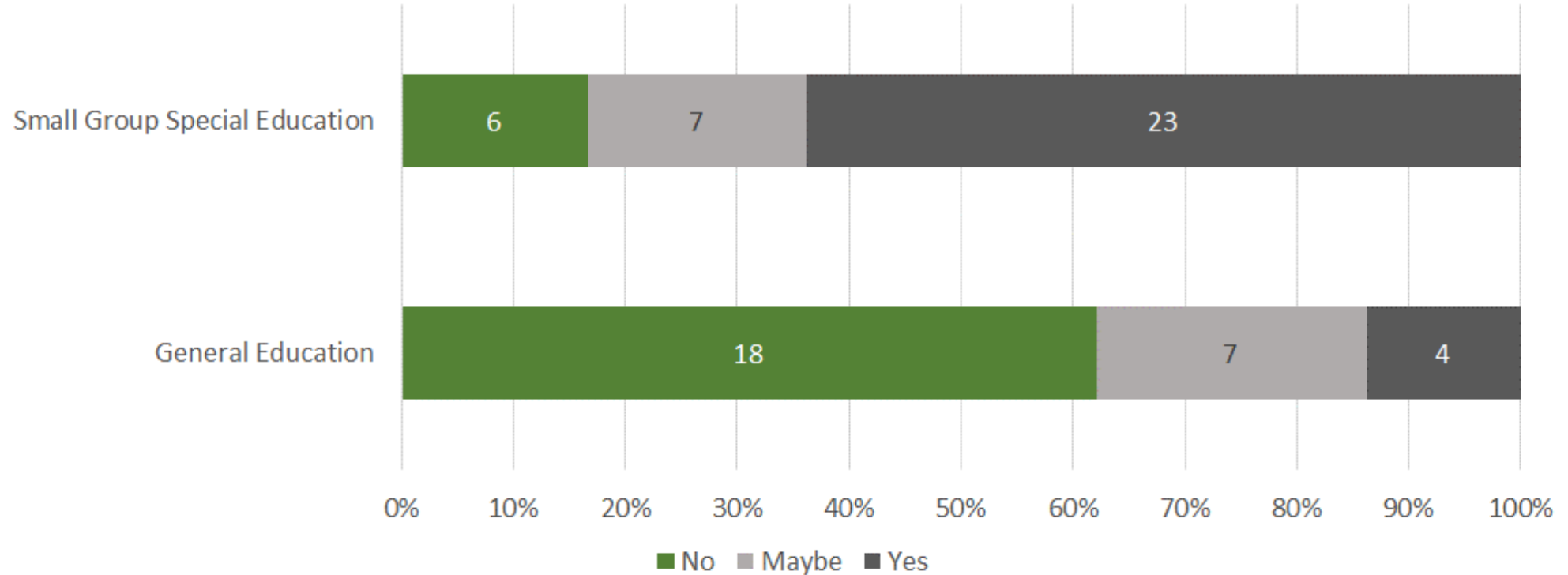
Total Moves Per Year in School



Statistically significant difference in paired T-test ($p < .001$)

Parent Perceived Impact on Education

Do you feel that the quality of the education of your children has been negatively impacted by boundary/school changes?



Statistically significant difference in chi-squared test ($p < .001$)

Boundary Changes Per School Year Transition*

Including Kindergarten Transitions[‡]

Small Group Special Education Classes

- 38 children
- 169 combined years of education
- 131 possible school year transitions*
- 90 total combined boundary changes
- **Boundaries change in 69% of school year transitions**

General Education Classes

- 77 children
- 379 combined years of education
- 302 possible school year transitions*
- 19 total combined boundary changes
- **Boundaries change in 6.3% of school year transitions**

*Boundary changes typically happen between years of school. A student having attended school for 5 years has had four 'School Year Transitions' or opportunities for a boundary change.

[‡]Alpine School District nearly always transitions students between schools for kindergarten vs. 1-6th grade. This analysis includes that transition

Boundary Changes Per School Year Transition*

Excluding Kindergarten Transitions[‡]

Small Group Special Education Classes

- 38 children
- 169 combined years of education
- 131 possible school year transitions*
- 52 total combined boundary changes
- **Boundaries change in 40% of school year transitions**

General Education Classes

- 77 children
- 379 combined years of education
- 302 possible school year transitions*
- 19 total combined boundary changes
- **Boundaries change in 6.3% of school year transitions**

*Boundary changes typically happen between years of school. A student having attended school for 5 years has had four 'School Year Transitions' or opportunities for a boundary change.

[‡]Alpine School District nearly always transitions students between schools for kindergarten vs. 1-6th grade. This analysis excludes that transition.

Comments About Impact of Boundary Changes on Children in Small Group Classes

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- Our two boys with special needs take months to adjust to a new school, months that they are barely progressing in school. We have had a boundary change nearly every year they have been in school. Our one boy has selective mutism and this past year in a new school only started to speak after 4 months. Our other boy has Autism and Down Syndrome and will test his boundaries instead of learning for about two months. These months are always incredibly difficult for us.
 - We lost an entire year of progress due to one change and struggled with regressions and a several month set back with others.

Comments About Impact of Boundary Changes on Children in Small Group Classes

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- Thankfully those boundary changes occurred during Preschool/Kindergarten years, but his progress didn't really start to flourish until first grade and he was attending school all day and with the same teachers year after year.
 - We have been changed from one school to another. Though I hope this will be a better fit for him and closer to home.
 - My daughters boundaries changed, but I kept her at her school. I had to provide the transportation, though, which meant I had to adjust my work schedule. Which was a substantial loss in pay, as I was hourly at the time. Well worth it though. I fostered her for years before I adopted her. She had moved homes/schools dozens of times. I prioritized school stability over all else at that point in our journey.

Comments About Impact of Boundary Changes on Children in Small Group Classes

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- I go to extreme lengths to keep my daughters school placement the same. Neighborhood school doesn't matter at all to me, but stability does. Although, with the extremely high turnover rate of SPED teachers... there's not a lot of stability either way. A location change is far less disruptive than a teacher/peer change-IMO.
 - My Daughter has so much anxiety with new changes that she gets sick to the point of throwing up. She needs structure/schedules and doesn't do well with moves/changes.

Comments About Impact of Boundary Changes on Children in Small Group Classes

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- During preschool my children had 3 boundary changes to 2 different schools. TK was at our boundary elementary but small group elementary classes were at a different elementary in the district and not in our neighborhood. The elementary didn't even feed to our boundary high school. We live in a corner of the district where the elementary feeds to 3 different high schools - it's a challenge for kids without disabilities let alone with disabilities. There should be small group options in all neighborhood, Junior high and high school schools to accommodate children who need/want more specialized services. We ultimately chose to do a k-9 charter school for our kids with special needs because there would be more consistency. It was hard to take them away from their neighborhood peers but ultimately less of a fight to get the inclusion we desired with the supports they needed. Our kids have definitely missed out by not attending school with their neighborhood and church peers.

Comments About Impact of Boundary Changes on Children in Small Group Classes

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- We will start our 3rd year in the fall and will be at a third school. So far we don't know what school and we're told to expect that schools can change every year. Change in environments is stressful for my child. Every time we change schools it takes him a long time to feel comfortable. I am also sad when he doesn't get to see familiar faces year after year. He (and I) don't have a sense of belonging to the school. It makes it difficult to make friends and feel like we belong.
 - My biggest issue is my children could not attend the same school together. My special needs child had to go to a school outside our neighborhood boundary. So she did not know anyone and they didn't know her or our family.

Comments About Impact of Boundary Changes on Children in Small Group Classes

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- Our kids need to be in their local schools with the right support. No more changing schools and changing teachers and changing friends. They need to build relationships and it is so hard for them to do that when each year they are moving to new schools.
 - "Education is an experience not just academics" (AP English teacher at AFHS). When children are changed twice in elementary school attending three different schools, new friends have to be made, and new surroundings adjusted to. Special needs students have a more difficult time making friends and adjusting to new surroundings. Special needs children aren't with their neighborhood peers when transported out of boundaries. Lose connections with neighbors. "It takes a village to raise a child" and their connection with their neighbors is greatly reduced. The natural interactions when walking to school, carpooling with neighbors, and school activities are greatly reduced which reduces exposure and acceptance to others that are different. When we are around people that haven't been around handicap people, there is more awkwardness, more uncertainty, more shunning, increased exclusion.

Comments About Impact of Boundary Changes on Children in Small Group Classes

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- The adjustment is hard, but once they are settled I don't think it affects their educational experience. But the adjustment can sometimes take several weeks depending on the needs of the student.
 - My son attended Hillcrest and loved it there, he was sad and was a little worried about attending Centennial, but knowing that he was going to be with all of his friends and teachers made it much easier to transition.
 - My biggest issue is my children could not attend the same school together. My special needs child had to go to a school outside our neighborhood boundary. So she did not know anyone and they didn't know her or our family.

Comments About Impact of Boundary Changes on Children in Small Group Classes

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- I want my child with his siblings in our home Elementary school. I am sick of our kiddos being moved around to different elementary schools. This would never happen with typically developing kids. Inclusion is a good thing for ALL students!
 - Boundary changes created a difficult situation for both myself and other parents who then needed to drive our children to and from school in order to not disrupt their learning environment with a teacher who consistently showed significant progress in my child's cognitive growth.
 - I have submitted a formal letter to the school board and special education office regarding our experience

Comments About Impact of Boundary Changes on Children in Small Group Classes

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- It's ridiculous. All students should be eligible to go to their neighborhood school just like any other child. Letting transportation decide where these students go each year is discrimination and is criminal.
 - When my child changes schools it takes time for him to adjust and become comfortable to his new surroundings, routines, teachers and peers. This causes a delay in his educational progress and in reaching his IEP goals.
 - My child has not gotten the quality or continuity of education that is expected out of a school district. Therefore it affects her education, her confidence, and relationships with both peers and faculty. Continuity for any child regardless if they are special education or not, is crucial to their learning and development.

Comments About Impact of Boundary Changes on Children in Small Group Classes

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- When boundary changes are made there is no communication from the district. These kids need stability.
 - My daughter has been moved from school to school. We have had to drive her to school at times because the district would not accommodate her special needs and doctor recommended time for attendance. We as parents are always willing to do what ever is needed for her best interests. We have been luck to land at Highland Elementary where she is excited to go, has made friends and is learning. It has taken three years for my daughter to learn the names of her teachers and fellow students. She may have special needs but definitely deserves a chance to stay in an environment she is comfortable in. The district would not make a change like this to mainstream students without years of planning and consulting with parents. ASD tells us where she will be sent to school until shortly before the new school year starts. Why does ASD want to sweep the special needs kids under the rug and treat my child like a second class student?

Comments About Impact of Boundary Changes on Children in Small Group Classes

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- As my daughter has gotten older she has struggled with school changes socially, behaviorally, and educationally. Grace has friends in her program and teachers who know her well. When she is uprooted she loses months of learned routines and consistency of teaching. It takes a lot of time for teachers and specialists to get to know and understand the special needs kids. The longer my daughter has been able to stay in the same program the more she has progressed and achieved her IEP goals. She is already significantly behind and needs consistency in her education. This last year she has finally begun to make friends at school both in her special needs class and with mainstream students. Bottom line my daughter needs stability in order to achieve her potential.

Comments About Impact of Boundary Changes on Children in Small Group Classes

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- I've witnessed many negative affects an Irregular or random placement of students from other schools have had on them personally and on the students already in the classroom.
 - We were lucky that our school change put my son in our neighborhood school so he can go with his brother now but I worry about them changing on him again.
 - Please don't change Cedar Ridge SpEd !!!!
 - My child developed behavior problems that took YEARS to overcome from the constant changes in schools, schedules and teachers. Once this settled to one school with one consistent teacher, things improved drastically. The critical years for behavior foundations are made during these years in the elementary system. Please consider the needs of these students and the voice of the parents in your choices.

Comments About Impact of Boundary Changes on Children in Small Group Classes

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- My little girl will be going into 1st next year and this will be her 4th school. I current live in the boundaries for highland elementary. I have patiently endured the preschool and kindergarten constant shuffle. New school every single year, knowing that my boundary elementary school houses the most consistent life skills class. Consistency is what we have longed for since the day she started school in the alpine school district. And this one thing she has never got. That is what the highland elementary program offers. And once again. It seems. Alpine school district is falling short in providing ALL their students this right.

Comments About Impact of Boundary Changes on Children in Small Group Classes

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- My child attended two different preschools (*her second year of preschool they changed from SpEd to inclusion and it was awful for my child so I moved her to another school) and then a third school for kindergarten and now a 4th school for life skills 1-6. I am so excited that she gets to stay at the same school for the rest of elementary. Having a child change schools every year is hard. I believe it is even more difficult for a child with special needs. In my experience, my child begins excelling once she has adapted to the new environment. It would be great if she didn't have to do that every year.

Study Disclaimers

- This study was conducted by Taylor Davis, MS Stat, who is the father of two boys who attend small group classes at Highland Elementary. I obviously had a bias in this research towards understanding the true impact of boundary changes.
- This study was conceived as we parents began to compare experiences as it was announced that the small group classes were to be move from Highland Elementary. Many of us parents were surprised (some were not) to hear that other families had transitioned so many times.
- We wanted to know if our smaller group was an outlier or if other parents in the district were experiencing the same.
- Participants were encouraged to participate through social media and email. Participants were encouraged to submit a survey whether or not they had experienced boundary changes and honestly answer so we could find the truth.



Taylor Davis, MS Stat, MBA



Our Boys Simon and Louie
(proudly took their own selfie)