



#A2R2

Ann Arbor Reasonable Return

Parents of Ann Arbor
Public Schools Students
with IEP and 504 Plans:
Survey Results

October 27, 2020 | a2reasonablereturn.org

RESULTS AT-A GLANCE

95%

of respondents have student(s) currently enrolled in AAPS

84%

of respondents have an existing IEP for their child

32%

of respondents feel their IEP team has been very attentive to their needs

13%

of respondents feel their IEP is being fully met



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ann Arbor families that have a student enrolled (or previously enrolled) in Ann Arbor Public Schools (AAPS) with an IEP or 504 plan were surveyed to understand the extent to which their IEP is being met and their experiences with virtual learning. The survey was conducted from October 16-23 and distributed throughout various social media sites. The survey was developed, disseminated, and analyzed by members of *Ann Arbor Reasonable Return*, a grassroots advocacy group of parents, students and community members concerned that all online schooling is leaving many Ann Arbor children and families behind.

We received 38 survey responses. Most of the parents had a student with an IEP while 5 had students with a 504 plan. 32% of respondents feel that their IEP team has been very attentive to their needs and 13% of families feel their IEP is being fully met. Overall, parent experiences with special education services this year have been mostly negative, reporting issues such as ineffective supports, lack of communication, and overall failure to deliver required services. Parents report frustration with virtual learning and an overwhelming desire to shift to an in-person learning model for these vulnerable students.



OBJECTIVES OF THE SURVEY

- Gain an understanding of parent's experiences with IEP and 504 plans in the 2020/2021 school year
- Form a better understanding of what share of parents feel their IEP and 504 Plans are being fully met
- Determine the extent to which parents feel their IEP support team is attentive to their needs
- Gather important feedback to share with the AAPS Board of Education and Superintendent Swift.



BACKGROUND

With the arrival of Covid-19 lockdowns in March many families nationwide were informed that their children's services would now be entirely remote or, in many cases, suspended altogether. July 2020 study from the National Institute for Early Education Research at the Rutgers Graduate School of Education, which looked at 1,000 preschool-age children across the country, found that only 37% of children with IEPs were receiving full services, while nearly 25% of these students received no services at all — despite federal law requiring otherwise.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, Ann Arbor Public Schools must consider and protect the health and safety of all students and staff as they strive to afford students with IEPs the FAPE to which they are entitled through a variety of modes of instruction. According to the State of Michigan, at the beginning of each school year, each public agency must have in effect, for each child with a disability within its jurisdiction, an IEP (34 CFR § 300.323). The IEP must be in place to start the school year; must be based on the unique needs of the individual child with a disability; and must consist of a full offer of a FAPE based on what would be a full in-person instructional day in a brick-and-mortar school setting.

While still in a fully virtual learning environment, advocacy groups in Ann Arbor have become increasingly concerned about the extent to which Ann Arbor students are getting their services and obligations met.



THE APPROACH

Our goal with this survey was to hear from parents and families about their children's experiences with IEP/504 services in the virtual learning environment. On October 14, during a school board meeting, the community was informed that all IEP/504 services were being met. We had reason to question this statement based on personal stories we had heard.

We designed this survey to strengthen our understanding of the IEP/504 experience in our community. This survey was distributed via social media to Ann Arbor parents (Ann Arbor Schools Musings group and the Ann Arbor Area Mamas Network). It was distributed on October 16 and closed on October 23. Email admin@a2reasonablereturn.org with any questions.

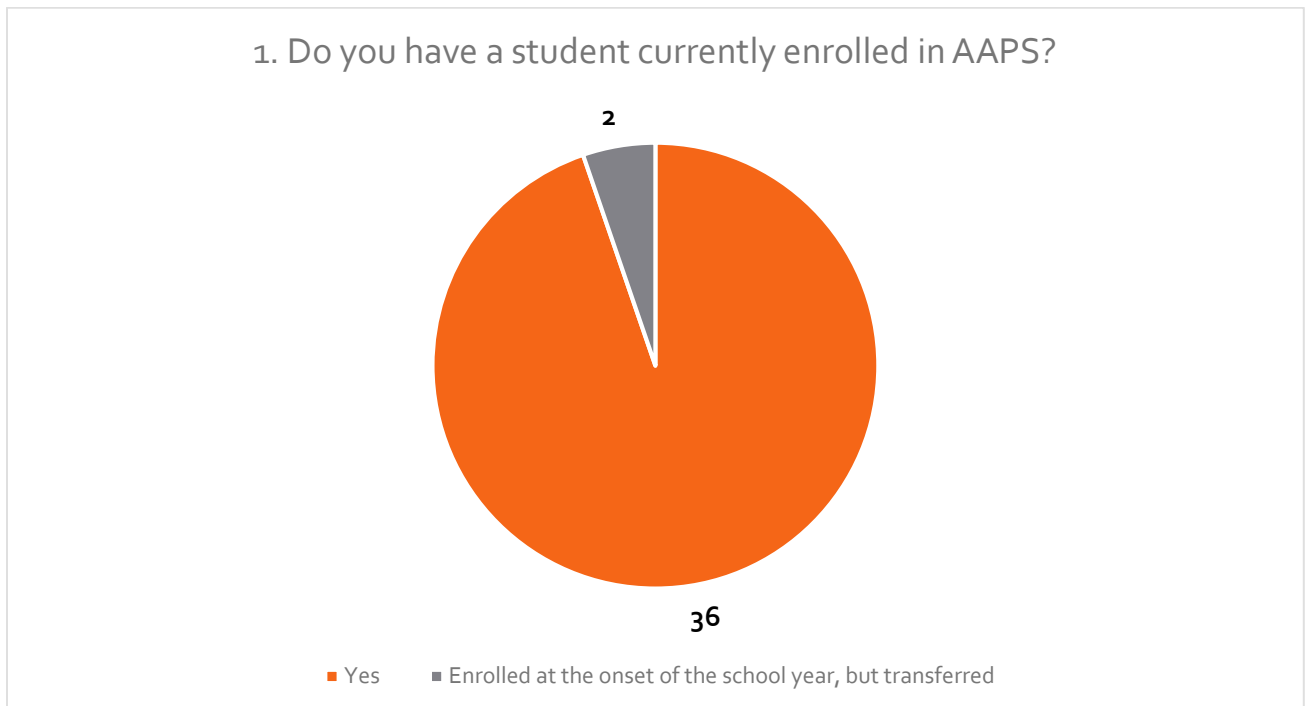


SURVEY RESULTS

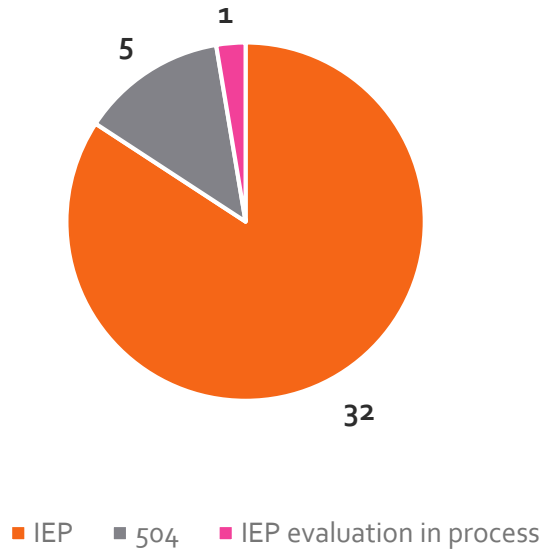
Key Findings

- 68.42% (26 out of 38) respondents shared somewhat negative or negative experiences when asked about child’s accommodations and services during virtual school
 - Somewhat negative: 11 out of 38 comments; learning is not effectively supported although effort is being made by the school
 - Negative: 15 out of 38 comments; services are lacking and/or ineffective
- 68.42% of respondents (26 out of 38) say their special ed team has been not attentive, somewhat attentive, or other. 31.57% (12 out of 38) respondents feel that the special ed team has been very attentive.
- 68.42% of respondents (26 out of 38) state that their IEP plan or 504 accommodations are mostly unmet or fully unmet or other. 31.57% (12 out of 38) state that these are mostly met or fully met.

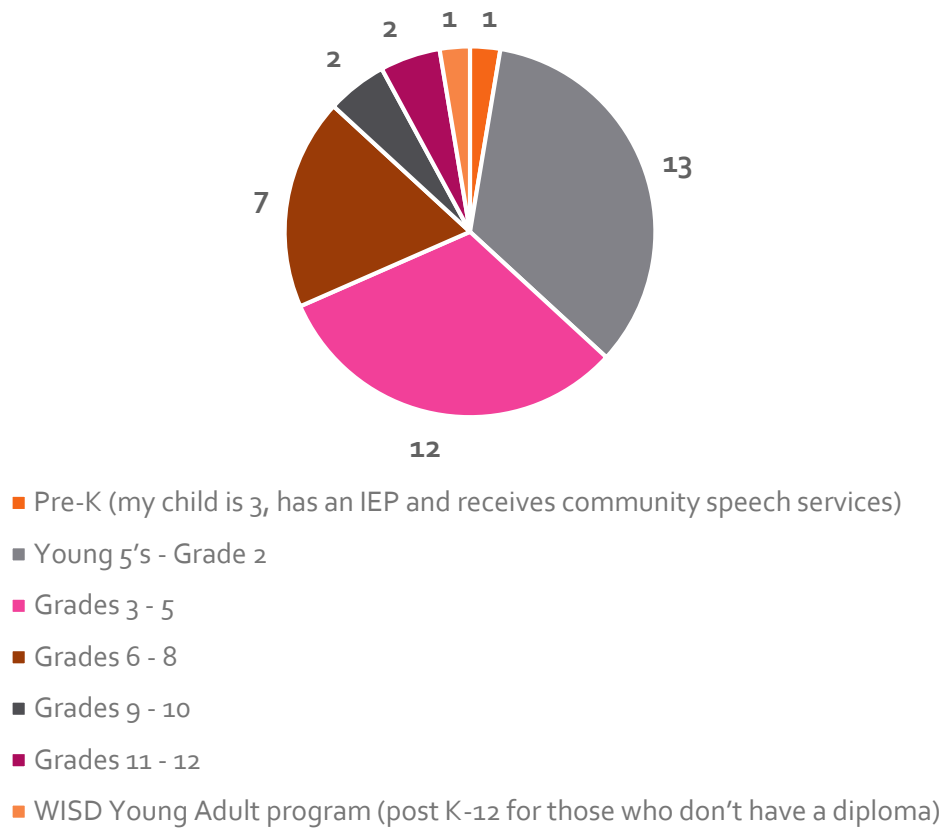
Full Results



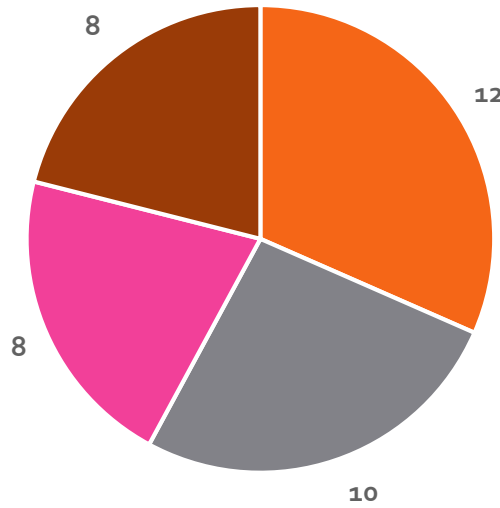
2. Does your AAPS student have an IEP or 504 plan? (N=38)



3. What Grade Level is Your Child? (N=38)

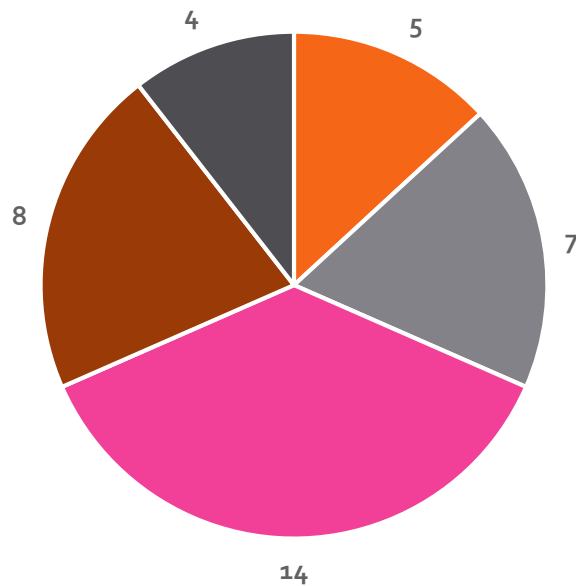


4. Do you feel your Special Ed Team has been attentive to your needs? (N=38)



Yes, Very Attentive Somewhat Attentive Not Attentive Other

5. Do you feel that your IEP or 504 accommodations are being adequately met? (N=38)



Yes, fully met Mostly met Mostly unmet Fully unmet Other

EXPERIENCE WITH ACCOMODATIONS AND SERVICES

6. Please describe your experience with your child's accommodations and services during virtual school (N=38).

- **Positive experience - 5 comments**
- **Somewhat positive - 4 comments** (aspects of services that are going well, while also indicating concerns with respect to delayed services, and services that are meeting some but not all the needs of their students)
- **Somewhat negative - 11 comments** (learning is not effectively supported although effort is being made by the school)
- **Negative - 15 comments** (services are lacking and/or ineffective)

POSITIVE EXPERIENCES (N=5)

5 parents report positive experiences:

Parents used words like *"fantastic"*, *"wonderful"*, *"responsive"*, and described accommodations that were *"easily met in the virtual environment"*.

SOMEWHAT POSITIVE EXPERIENCES (N=4)

4 parents report somewhat positive experiences.

In these comments, respondents have noted aspects of services that are going well, while also indicating concerns. Parents say, *"it's fine except I am needing to be his TA"* and that services were *"delayed but now OK"*.

SOMEWHAT NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES (N=11)

11 parents report somewhat negative category, describing experiences wherein learning is not being effectively supported although effort is being made by the district.

Parents reported situations with services that *"most are dependent on me"*, spending time with their child every zoom session *"changing his negative attitude about a computer meeting"* and shared about long delays *"it took 4 weeks for services to start"*. Parents also shared their frustration over services offered in the virtual environment that are not meeting the needs of their children. Some parents noted that their child lacks the attention span and focus for a virtual setting and the fact that many services such as occupational therapy and physical therapy are completely ineffective virtually.

NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES (N=15)

15 parents describe negative experiences wherein services are lacking and/or totally ineffective.

Respondents used words such as “horrid” and worried that their children are taking a “big step back”.

Parents reported that their child’s IEPs have not been implemented or completely denied. One parent shared that their child “has not been online for weeks and no one reaches out to make a connection with them”; another said “no real time connection was happening daily”. One parent shared that their child was asked to be “alone in a break out room to do Lexia during special ed time”. Lack of meaningful connection from support staff was also a common theme among comments.

ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK FOR ADMINISTRATORS AND BOARD OF EDUCATION

7. Is there anything else you would like to share with Superintendent Swift or the Board of Education? (N=31)

POSITIVE COMMENTS (N=2)

- *“My child’s IEP renewal meeting happened in May as planned. He is getting the same services he was pre-pandemic. TC went above and beyond, sending him several notes and cards in the mail during the spring/summer.”*
- *“I wish the delays to ramp up some services didn’t exist, and I am pleased where we have come since this spring when services were delayed and mostly non-existent”*

DISSATISFACTION (N=29)

Some comments are quoted in italics below. In a few cases, comments have been excerpted for the sake of brevity. All comments are available by request to admin@a2reasonablereturn.org.

- *“You are leaving so many children behind ...What happened to the promises of the Connections + program? What happened to a commitment to equity and meeting the needs of all learners? You are making decisions that will have negative LIFELONG consequences for many children.”*
- *“When I have inquired about in person services, I have been told I am welcome to explore private speech therapy.”*
- *“My child required emergency room treatment including multiple IV medications due specifically to the effects of too much virtual online class time having medical consequences. My child has had an ongoing migraine with daily vomiting for eighteen days and counting...These issues are not isolated, multiple physicians and therapists have written to you warning you about the dire consequences to our children. How can you in good conscience continue to ignore science and the very real risks to our children that exist outside of COVID in the risk analysis for providing proper support to our most at risk students?”*

- *"There is no excuse for saying it's not possible to determine whether IEPs are being fully implemented (per the 10/14 board meeting). It is possible, and it is someone's job to track that, and we parents can assure you it is NOT happening. I moved to this neighborhood for the schools, but I have concluded AAPS is only a good district for neurotypical learners. Please prove me wrong."*
- *"But due to the long-haul nature of this pandemic, perhaps it is time to take greater risks in terms of our physical health for the sake of our mental health, physical family needs, and our future. I, for example, received word last week that I have been terminated "due to inactivity" from the job I have loved doing since 2013. I have not been able to go into work due to COVID and the fact that my first grader with an IEP needs me to physically sit with him from 830-2 four days a week in order to be able to participate in education."*
- *"This is a waste of a school year for my child so far. He hasn't learned anything and does not have the tools to help him succeed. I would have pulled him but was told we would lose the IEP and I fought so hard to get it."*
- *"Virtual school is completely destroying my child's education."*
- *"My child has dropped back 2 levels in school and will likely move into middle school at a 3rd grade level. He has been depressed and anxious since March, and feels like his life is not worth living (his words). While in school, pre-covid and with IEP, he was excelling....It is hard for us to understand ...how surrounding communities (Dexter, Chelsea, etc) can make it work. Hard to believe that AAPS does not have the resources to make it work... So so sad, troubling, and heartbreaking."*
- *"We were told about a connections plus program that was geared towards providing additional support to students at risk and with disabilities during remote learning. All the research shows disabled students are at risk during remote instruction yet there has not been information on how disabled students can access the connections plus program (which we now hear is offered by "community partners" but unclear how AAPS students access the programs. This brings forth the issues with transparency that continue to be an AAPS problem from the top down."*
- *"The description of what was presented to the BOE of what supports and services are being provided to students do not reflect what is actually happening and to present that you are providing these supports is a slap in the face to students, parent caregivers, and their medical providers that are struggling to pick up the pieces left behind by AAPS massive failure to comply with special education laws."*

Appendix A: Question 1-‘Other’ Comments (N=2)

Question: Does you have a child currently enrolled in AAPS?

- “Other-I have two children (one with 504, one with IEP) in AAPS. We moved to private school due to inability to accommodate them virtually. AAPS is still legally obligated to support my child with an IEP.
- “Other-I removed them from AAPS because of Dr. Swift’s decision for remote learning my 4th grade sone has an IEP and I knew that virtual learning was substandard in the spring and would continue this fall.”

Appendix B: Question 4-‘Other’ Comments (N=8)

Question: Do you feel your special ed team has been attentive to your needs?

- “Other: Her team is lovely but they don’t have the power to be her TA”
- “Other: Not IEP no team (unsure of meaning)
- “Other: Initially they seemed attentive but after the first two weens the 1:1 supports stopped, it’s like they forgot about my child and no longer responded to requests for meetings appropriately”
- “Other: (Attentive) To physician requests but not parent requests, at least initially
- “Other: My kid can’t stay on the computer, so I haven’t asked for anything. We are just ignoring school until something more useful is a possibility”
- “Other: Yes-to the teacher, she tries but she cannot control the hours; not at all from the admins
- “Other: Dr. Fidishin and the administration were of zero help. She flat out refused to help me implement accommodations that were asked for. Our principal/teacher have been more attentive but have not been able to provide accommodations.

Appendix C: Question 5-‘Other’ Comments (N=4)

Question: Do you feel that your IEP or 504 accommodations are being adequately met?

- “Other: Avhievement plan developed and sent to middle school, largely not followed.”
- “Other: Halfway met”
- “Other: Mostly unmet, but possibly improving now that there is finally a full time TC for his academic support class. The first 5 weeks were a complete loss in terms of meaningful IEP services”
- “Other: Met as best as they can in this environment. But it is not working. Child ABSOLUTELY needs in person supports”