

SPECIAL EDUCATION at ETHS:

Every student at ETHS deserves the opportunity to receive an excellent, equitable and inclusive education at ETHS. We must acknowledge and address the significant gap in academic opportunities and outcomes for our ETHS students with IEPs.

IEP students cover a wide range of disabilities and areas of need. And each student has a different story and experience.

However, when we look at disabled students as a group and disaggregate data by IEP status, the data* shows that students with IEPs have the lowest cumulative unweighted GPA (2.81), attendance rate (87.6%), and lowest extracurricular participation (31%), as compared to other groups disaggregated by race, binary gender identity, and income status.

In the area of extracurricular participation, there is some noted improvement in that the percentage of students with IEPs participating in at least one extracurricular activity increased from 20% in SY2021 to 31% in SY2022. The current Student Activities Director has collaborated with the Special Ed department to make inclusivity in extracurricular settings a main priority and to intentionally pursue new strategies to increase the number of students with IEPs participating in extracurricular activities. This is a great start, but we have a long way to go.

**D202 Board of Education Wellbeing Report, SY2021-22*

When we look at D202 discipline data, we also know that a disproportionate number of school suspensions are granted to disabled students with IEPs, and that rate is particularly high and egregious for Black students with IEPs. The district must be vigilant in examining the incidence rate of staff disciplining students for behavior related to their disability - something explicitly prohibited by federal law. We must do better in reducing suspensions of IEP students, identifying root causes of behavior, and supporting students in ways appropriate to their needs. The longer and more frequently students are out of school, the less opportunity we have to provide them with the education they deserve.

WHAT TO DO:

To optimally learn and grow and reach their potential, all students need to be seen, heard, and respected. Faculty and staff need to demonstrate through their *actions* that they believe in each student's capabilities. Students succeed when they feel valued, affirmed, and have a sense of belonging in school.

The district's goal is to provide an inclusive environment that supports belonging for all. As a district, we have to do better in achieving that goal. The Special Education department already does many things well, but also has many areas for growth.

The Board should consistently and carefully review data on IEP implementation and compliance - and the effectiveness in setting and meeting IEP goals.

In reviewing how our students with IEPs are being served, we must involve the voices of staff and students in Special Education, and foster more dialogue and communication with ETHS families & the community on the lived experiences of IEP students at ETHS. What is the status of the special education Parent Advisory Committee?

Within the school, all benefit with more communication between case managers, educators, and families.

A key element to improve the outcomes for students with IEPs is more training & support for Gen Ed teachers on implementing IEP and 504 accommodations.

The Board and district should also remain committed to Value-Based Budgeting, and accordingly invest in paraprofessionals and SPED transition services. Can paraprofessionals be paid more competitively? How can D202 alter its recruitment and outreach efforts to attract, hire, and retain an increased number of highly qualified paraprofessionals? Currently, ETHS is not fully staffed with paraprofessionals. The District can and should invest in SPED transition services through specialized counseling services focused specifically on students with IEPs. It is positive to see posted on the ETHS employment page an opening for the new position of Student Transition Counselor - a counselor whose caseload will specifically be Transfer students with credit deficiencies, ETHS Day School students, Off-Campus Placement students, and students in the SPED department's TEAMS/EDGE special programs.

We cannot let up on our urgency to provide our disabled students with an education that allows them to reach their potential and to pursue a post high school plan in line with their interests, capabilities, and aspirations.

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