



Using Parent and Youth Feedback to Inform High-Quality Educational Programming

[Slide 1- Using Parent and Youth Feedback to Inform High-Quality Educational Programming] Tessie Bailey: Welcome to the webinar, Using Parent and Youth Feedback to Inform High-Quality Educational Programming for Students with Disabilities. Now this webinar is sponsored by the PROGRESS Center, which is a U.S. Office of Special Education Programs-funded center, focused on promoting progress for students with disabilities.

[Slide 2- Why We Do What We Do] My name is Tessie Bailey, and I'm the director of the center. The center was developed in response to the Endrew F. Supreme Court Decision in 2017 and it stated that the IEP or the individualized educational program offered by a local agency, often referred to as a district, must be reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress in light of the child's circumstances.

Now under the IDEA we know that the IEP serves as the foundation for promoting progress for students with disabilities and over the last year or past two years, we've released a number of tip sheets and online modules and webinars to support educators in the development of individualized programming. In today's session, we'll focus on our group findings from some focus groups that we did with parents and caregivers and students who are young adults with IEPs.

[Slide 3- Promoting Progress for Students with Disabilities] Now to ensure free and appropriate public education, you can see that in the last box where it says FAPE, as well as improved outcomes for eligible students with disabilities. The PROGRESS Center supports local educators in both the development and implementation of high-quality educational programming.

I'll just state that when we think about educational programming for students with disabilities, it's not just the IEP but also the supplemental tier one and supports that are being provided to the student.

[Slide 4- The PROGRESS Center] Now, the PROGRESS Center provides information and resources tools and technical assistance to support educators in both the development and implementation.

We have three aligned streams of work, knowledge development, intensive technical assistance, and universal supports, so today, our knowledge development work will be highlighted and we'll include valuable resources in developing the knowledge and the skills and infrastructure to promote progress for students with disabilities.

[Slide 5- Poll] We want to start out with a poll, and you'll see it pop up on your screen.



Please take a moment to respond to the question: what is your current role? Are you a special educator, general educator, administrator, or other? And if you are other, you can just type that into the chat box.

So we're at about 53 percent. I see special education mediation programs. I see TA providers. We're about 90 percent, so we will close today's poll. And what you see is most of you fall in not being a special educator or administrator, so we have a lot of others. Just make sure that you share in the chat box who's with us today. I want to welcome our administrators for joining us today. I see some parents as well, that's excellent!

[Slide 6- Meet the Presenters] Well, I am pleased to introduce our presenters for today. I'll first introduce Dr. Stacy Hirt. She supports the work of PROGRESS, and she is joined by Joey Hunziker with the National Center for Learning Disabilities, often referred to as NCLD. They've been a partner of the center since it launched in 2019. All right Stacy, I'm going to pass it over to you.

[Slide 7- Objectives] **Stacy Hirt:** I'm Stacy Hirt. I'm a researcher with the American Institutes for Research. So our objectives today are, one, to first share survey findings from a series of focus groups of parents and also focus groups with young adults who had IEPs in school. Second, understand family's perspectives and experiences. Third, identify specific examples provided by families of students with disabilities and adults with disabilities.

So what we're going to share lots of examples and discuss some collaboration successes but also challenges. And last, we will share practice recommendations and resources based on survey findings.

[Slide 8- Why Conduct Student and Family Focus Groups?] So why conduct student and family focus groups? Well, in 2021 we partnered with NCLD, National Center for Learning Disabilities, and SPAN, a parent advocacy network, and our goal was to hear perspectives about implementing their IEPs, the extent to which having an IEP contributed to high school success and post-high school success, and, last, to what extent the quality of services supported educational goals. Our next goal was to share learning with schools to support the development and implementation of high-quality educational programming.

[Slide 9- Perspectives and Experiences with Special Education] Which brings us to this brief, Perspectives and Experiences with Special Education. So this brief is the anchor of our webinar today, it highlights the focus group questions, the survey findings, quotes, practice recommendations and additional resources. We will be dropping that in the chat box so you can get more information on the resources and links that anchor this webinar.

[Slide 10- Focus Groups: Parent Perspectives] Before I get started with parent perspectives, I want to share the structure of this webinar. This webinar is structured into three main parts. So first I'm going to share the parent survey findings. Next, Joey will share the young adult survey findings, and last, together we will share eight practice recommendations and various resources for educational stakeholders supporting students with disabilities.



[Slide 11- Recruitment: Parents] So, let's get started. Parent recruitment began about a year ago. Actually a year ago this month. This visual captures the four virtual focus groups that were held last spring. The next slide highlights a snapshot of participants.

[Slide 12- Recruitment: Parent Demographics] As you can see, the far-left column you can see that we surveyed a total of 35 parents. And the most interesting recruitment demographic that is actually not on this slide is that 35 of the 35 responded surveyed identified as female. In the next middle column, it highlights the 10 disability categories. The only areas that were not represented were deafness, deaf-blindness, and orthopedic impairment. In the third column to the right it highlights the parent representation from 16 states.

[Slide 13- Question One: Summary of Parent Responses] This is our first parent survey question of seven questions. For each statement, parents were asked do you strongly agree, disagree, agree or strongly agree with the following statement. For this question, parents were asked: my child has been successful in school. As we go through the survey responses, notice the chart split as in to the far left, the blue notes strongly disagree and to the far right the purple represents strongly agree. So I'm just going to share highlights from the survey but just so you get an gauge the blue is strongly disagree and the purple is strongly agree-- so each parent was then given an opportunity to give a rationale for their response.

[Slide 14- Question One: Parent Response] For question number one, findings indicated that less than half of parents and caregivers surveyed thought their child had been successful in school. Some parents find success as their child making academic progress toward their goal and other parents defined success as the school and educational system at large recognizing the strengths of their child while holding high expectations.

[Slide 15- Question One: Example Open-Ended Response] So this next slide represents a quote from one of our parents: "Special education isn't meant to be a lifelong sentence, it is support services to build and improve skill deficits. Students should exit special education. Special education is too focused on being compliant for procedures versus providing FAPE."

[Slide 16- Question Two: Summary of Parent Responses] I found the academic and behavioral and social emotional supports my child received helped facilitate their success in school. Again, answers reflect how parents define success.

[Slide 17- Question Two: Parent Response] Similar to question number one, less than half of parents and caregivers found the academic behavioral and social emotional support their child received facilitated school success. Further, some parents noted the support their child received did not match the child's disability and their academic needs. Many of the accommodations were provided based on what was available and not what was developmentally appropriate.

[Slide 18- Question Two: Example Open-Ended Response] One parent noted here: "I agree that the school does not understand his disability and does not have appropriate methodologies to meet his needs."



[Slide 19- Question Three: Summary of Parent Responses] For question three, my child feels or felt included in his or her school. For example, my child was invited to participate in school activities like sports, extracurricular activities and back to school nights.

[Slide 20- Question Three: Parent Response] For this question, survey responses indicated the majority 78 percent of parents and caregivers reported their child felt included in their education. So this is great, this is amazing, but we still had one in five parents who did not agree and they shared that they felt their child was not included in education.

[Slide 21- Question Three: Example Open-Ended Response] One parent shared: “If they're in a sport- or activity-based, he feels included. If it requires academic knowledge he would shy away and choose not to participate.”

[Slide 22- Question Four: Summary of Parent Responses] For question four, the statement as a parent or caregiver of a child with a disability, I feel or felt included in the school environment.

[Slide 23- Question Four: Parent Response]: For example, I was invited to school activities like back-to-school night and parent teacher association events, etc., etc. While some noted mixed experiences the majority felt included in the school community.

[Slide 24- Question Four: Example Open-Ended Response] One parent responded: “I have felt my schools did a good job with parent engagement. I led our special ed parent advisory committee for years, and served a term on the school board and participated on various stakeholder committees. These were roles focused on input and decision-making. The school also did a good job in providing more social activities.”

[Slide 25- Question Five: Summary of Parent Responses] Question number five, the statement was: I was feeling fully involved in the development of my child's IEP. For example, I feel or felt free to ask questions and/or offer suggestions as the IEP team discussed the goals, strengths, supports and needs for my child.

[Slide 26- Question Five: Parent Response] Question Survey responses indicated here that the majority, 63 percent of parents and caregivers, felt meaningfully involved in the development of their child's IEP, describing opportunities to ask questions and offer suggestions as the IEP team discussed goals, supports and student needs.

[Slide 27- Question Five: Example Open-Ended Response] One parent noted: “I received test scores twice per year as part of the testing requirements, each quarter for the IEP report card, and then monthly attached charts in the support info in the written narrative.”

[Slide 28- Question Six: Summary of Parent Responses] Question six: I rarely receive data about how my child was progressing toward his or her IEP goals.

[Slide 29- Question Six: Parent Response] For this question, less than 34 percent of respondents shared they regularly receive data about their child's progress, so let me repeat, less than 34 percent.



Many of the responses from the parents who disagreed with the statement focused on the lack of useful information and data they received and what it communicated about their child and their goals. Some parents found the progress reports they received improved after they pushed for some more communication.

[Slide 30- Question Six: Example Open-Ended Response] One parent noted: "Progress monitoring was lacking, and it was often anecdotal or observational."

[Slide 31- Question Seven: Summary of Parent Responses] Question seven: the last of the parent focus group questions states, this question is for parents and caregivers whose child finished high school. It stated: my child has high-quality post-high school transition plans. So again, a lot of our parents that were surveyed some still had students in school. So the parents that responded to this question had students that had experienced post-transition and post-high school.

[Slide 32- Question Seven: Parent Response] For this question, survey results indicated less than 29 percent of parents and caregivers thought their child received a high-quality transition plan.

[Slide 33- Question Seven: Example Open-Ended Response] One parent noted: "It doesn't seem like the success of students with disabilities is a priority. Parents here in my district are often pressured to designate "non-diploma" track and transition plans for students with IEPs. Transition plans are totally different than typical learners."

So at this time, I'm going to pass the conversation to Joey and he is going to share focus group survey results for young adults.

[Slide 34- Focus Groups: Student Perspectives] Joey Hunziker: Thanks, Stacy, and thanks for going over that.

Hi, my name is Joey Hunziker with the National Center for Learning Disabilities. I've had the great pleasure of working with AIR and the PROGRESS Center for almost three years now on this project, so we're really excited to be able to share these results with you. I'll be going through our survey and focus group results that we've conducted with young adults.

[Slide 35- Recruitment: Young Adults] Our recruitment was a little complicated for young adults. Some of you may know, finding and reaching young adults takes a lot of effort. So we did national outreach, we had a social media campaign and we did some targeted recruitment through some of our existing networks. All of that was to get young adults to complete a screening survey to make sure that we had a representative sample of young adults. And then we held several focus groups. If you see, there were eight focus groups, they tended to be smaller than the parent focus groups, and we also did two individual interviews with young adults who requested an individual conversation as opposed to a large group.

[Slide 36- Recruitment: Young Adult Demographics] We had fewer young adults represented than parents. As you see there's 21. Diversity of the respondents, 67 of those who identified as White, 14 who were identified as African American and then a good mix of folks identified as multi-racial and



then five percent as Hispanic or Latino. We had 10 disability categories represented although the overwhelming majority of students did show up with a specific learning disability. It is the highest incidence of disability in the K-12 system, so that makes sense. And we had 16 states represented in our focus groups.

[Slide 37- Question One: Summary of Adult Youth Responses] There were six questions for the young adults, and I wanted to share, before I jump in here, a lot of the young adults had fairly positive responses to most of the questions. It was in the discussion post-survey that we probed a little deeper and some of their responses were a little more mixed, and they opened up and revealed a little more about their experiences in school and with the educational programming that they received.

So hopefully you can pick up on some of the nuance here as I go through these. So, the first question was: I feel like my teachers, principals, and other staff have or had high expectations of me.

[Slide 38- Question One: Adult Youth Response] As you see, we had some young adults who disagreed, about 35 percent, but the overwhelming majority either agreed or strongly agreed. We did focus groups with mostly young adults who had already graduated high school, but a few who were still in high school. I think that breakdown is important to understand. Many of these young adults had already graduated and so their sphere of reference was a little bit in the past.

[Slide 39- Question One: Example Open-Ended Response] Some of the young adults also noted a mixed response of high and low expectations. This is a quote from one of our young adults: "I would say that teachers in our school had frustratingly high and low expectations of me in different contexts."

[Slide 40- Question Two: Summary of Adult Youth Responses] The second question was: I feel or felt like my teachers helped me to reach my goals.

[Slide 41- Question Two: Adult Youth Response] There's a very strong positive response there, about 81 percent indicated that their teachers helped them to reach their educational goals. However, some of them indicated that they felt like their teachers weren't really bought into helping them with their specific goals, or to understanding what they needed as individual students to be successful. And that's a recurring theme that I hope you'll pick up on in some of these responses.

[Slide 42- Question Two: Example Open-Ended Response] One of the quotes we heard from young adults was: "My goals were written in my IEP, but I think they could've actually taken more interest in what my goals were."

And I think that's an important nuance as you think about those IEPs and there's a transition IEP for students who are leaving the high school setting. That goalsetting can and should look a little differently, and some young adults noted that they really wanted that to be more individualized.

[Slide 43- Question Three: Summary of Adult Youth Responses] The third question was: I was involved in developing my IEP or individualized education program.



[Slide 44- Question Three: Adult Youth Response] While many young adults did agree with this, they thought their input was considered in developing their IEPs.

[Slide 45- Question Three: Example Open-Ended Response] A quotation from a young adult: "The school team always talks to the parents, not to us. Ask me too, ask the students."

We heard that quite a lot from young adults, that they felt like, while they were included in the process, those meetings, the discussions, whether or not they were actually elevated and involved in the decision-making was a very different example, and that's something that we heard from quite a few of our young adults.

[Slide 46- Question Four: Summary of Adult Youth Responses] Our fourth question that we asked was: I think having an IEP and the supports provided through my IEP were important for my success in school.

[Slide 47- Question Four: Adult Youth Response] As you can see, overwhelmingly young adults valued having an IEP and the supports and accommodations that came through having an IEP. This was really important for them because navigating school without accommodations is a very difficult process for many students.

[Slide 48- Question Four: Example Open-Ended Response] As you'll see here in this quote: "Extra time was really the most important for me. I always used all of my extra time and a distraction-reduced environment to test in as well as being allowed to walk out and take a break when I needed to."

[Slide 49- Question Five: Summary of Adult Youth Responses] Question five was: I feel or felt like I was included in my special education classroom and general education classrooms.

[Slide 50- Question Five: Adult Youth Response] You'll see that they felt they were included in their classrooms. The discussion here also centered on not just the academic setting of a school, but the nonacademic settings and whether or not students with disabilities felt included in those as well.

[Slide 51- Question Five: Example Open-Ended Response] This is from a young adult: "There was a special education teacher in addition to the main teacher in the general classroom who gave me extra support while not making me feel completely separated from my friends and classmates."

That was our last question, I miscounted. So thank you all for listening I'll pass this back to Stacy and we'll start talking about some of the recommendations.

[Slide 52- Practice Recommendations] Stacy Hirt: Thank you Joey. That's a lot, we shared a lot. We've had hundreds of pages of qualitative data from our parents and adult youth focus groups. So together SPAN, NCLD, and the PROGRESS Center collapsed the survey responses, we then coded, we conducted data analyses and identified eight practice recommendations for educational stakeholders. I'm going to share the first four practice recommendations, and Joey will share practice recommendations 5 through 8.



[Slide 53- Recommendation #1] Practice recommendation number one, which sounds like common sense, but you would be surprised: involve families and students in the IEP process. Parents, caregivers, and young adults want to be more involved in the development and implementation of students' IEPs. Parents, caregivers, and young adults value their role in the IEP process, districts should ensure meaningful participation of roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders on an IEP team.

[Slide 54- Resources to Support Involving Students and Families] We've highlighted some resources for you, beginning with resources to support involving families and students. The first is the PROGRESS Center self-paced learning module, The IEP Team, and I want to note quickly, again this is all anchored from the brief, so you don't have to write down all the websites.

All of the websites are linked for you in the summary brief. The first on the left is the PROGRESS Center's paced learning module, The IEP Team: Who's Who and Other Considerations. The second is a Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education training and support user guide. The third is the Early Childhood Advisory Council student-led IEP led webinar. Amy just dropped that link, so you can access all the links.

[Slide 55- Recommendation #2] Recommendation number two: intervene early. Parents, caregivers, and young adults noted that early evaluation and early intervention were a key aspect of student success. Young adults noted that early disability education and intervention were critical components.

[Slide 56- Resources to Support Intervening Early] We've identified two resources to support intervening early. The first is the National Center on Intensive Intervention website, the second is the PROGRESS Center Reviewing and Intensifying Instruction early intervention practice brief.

[Slide 57- Recommendation #3] The third recommendation: communicate and collaborate often. Again, this sounds like common sense, but you can't do this enough. Parents, caregivers, and young adults want to actively collaborate in the development and implementation of students' educational programming. Schools and districts should support IEP teams, parents and caregivers, and students with disabilities by communicating often to share information about student progress and promote opportunities for engagement, problem-solving, collaboration and advocacy. School staff should proactively seek input from parents and students to help ensure they're valued and co-equal members of the IEP team. We had one student who was quoted that they wished they were a part of this meeting. One shared: "I felt like I was on the outside looking in." Further, she stated: "They were discussing my needs and accommodations. Why didn't they just ask me?" She said she had many accommodations in her IEP that were not needed. So communicate and collaborate often.

[Slide 58- Resources to Support Communication and Collaboration] These practice resources to support communication are first, the Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education, otherwise known as CADRE, Inclusive Listening: Building Understanding, Supporting Understanding webinar. The second is the CADRE user guide that highlights engaging parents in productive partnerships, and the third is the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities' Steps to Success: Communicating with Your Child's School user guide.



[Slide 59- Recommendation #4] The fourth recommendation is: build on strengths. Young adults value customized and individualized educational programming and accommodations that were tailored to their needs. So build on their strengths. Districts should set ambitious expectations for students across general and special education settings. So the majority of our students shared they valued high expectations. Students repeated focus groups after focus groups, they wanted the bar to be raised.

[Slide 60- Resources to Support Building on Strength] Two resources supporting building on strengths are the PROGRESS Center IEP tip sheets series. These IEP tip sheets include, but are not limited to, PLAAFPs, measurable annual goals, measuring progress toward goals, overview of statements of services, and many more. The links are all in the brief. The second resource is the TIES Center Planning for Instruction for School and Distance Learning process user guide. The TIES center is the technical assistance center on inclusive practices and policies that works with students of disabilities from less inclusive to a more inclusive environment.

Now Joey's going to share practice recommendations 5 through 8.

[Slide 61- Recommendation #5] Joey Hunziker: Thanks, Stacy. As Stacy shared the first four, we have a couple more recommendations.

One thing that we heard quite often from young adults is that they really wanted their accommodations to match what they needed, and not just a menu of options that had been afforded to other students.

So districts should really support the development and implementation of high-quality educational programming by revisiting what accommodations and modifications supports that they have and are providing to students, to make sure that they're matching what students need.

[Slide 62- Resources to Support Matching Accommodations] And some of the resources shared here, you'll see the National Center for Systemic Implementation has a couple of video series focused on strategies, and then as Stacy mentioned previously, the IEP tip sheet series. There are a couple of good one-pagers there that are offered as resources.

[Slide 63- Recommendation #6] Recommendation number six is for districts to provide inclusive opportunities, thinking about the individualized needs of students and what is considered appropriate to create an inclusive educational programming for students with disabilities, and make sure to include students with disabilities in both academic and nonacademic activities. As I mentioned before, that's something we heard that students felt like they were included in the classroom, but out of the school, there was a less strong sense of belonging and inclusion in the wider school community.

[Slide 64- Resources to Providing Inclusive Opportunities] And some resources here: You'll see a resource from CCSSO, the CEEDAR Center, and the Oak Foundation around building and supporting inclusive schools. Then you'll see a resource from the PROGRESS Center with a focus on practice and 10 ways that schools can foster belonging for students with disabilities, and then the last resource is from the TIES Center, and that focuses on instructional practices for students with the most significant disabilities.



[Slide 65- Recommendation #7] Then recommendation number seven, that transition period for students is very important. So, districts should focus on building young adult capacity in the areas of self-advocacy, self-determination, understanding their rights under disability laws, and providing accommodations for that high school and post-high school transition to ensure that they're successful. And those are things that can be done in the classroom and outside of the classroom to support students as well as in that transition plan.

[Slide 66- Resources to Support Transition Needs] Some of the resources that you'll see, a resource from the NTACT, the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition. They have a collaborative focus on this. And then a couple more resources around that secondary transition process and what that looks like for students. There are both legal requirements of that transition process, but also good practices and things that can really build students' confidence and self-advocacy skills so that they can successfully transition after high school.

[Slide 67- Recommendation #8] And then in our last recommendation, professional learning. As I'm sure everyone who's a teacher or in a school-based setting knows, professional learning is really critical to building that relationship between parents, caregivers, students, and the school community. As you heard, parents, caregivers, and young adults really want teachers and support staff to have knowledge about disability, to understand evidence-based practice and what professional development practices support that. And a general understanding of special education laws. It's not required that you be an expert on IDEA or the ADA, but understanding what does that process look like for students, who should be involved, what are the roles of everyone involved in the process of creating an IEP and developing inclusive programming? That's really something we heard.

[Slide 68- Resources to Provide Professional Learning] And the last set of resources actually come from the Department of Education. There are some Dear Colleague letters and other resources on IDEA to be able to support you with that. And I think – actually, is the one on the left, is that the PROGRESS Center as well?

Stacy Hirt: Yes.

Joey Hunziker: I wanted to make sure. It looked familiar, I thought it was the PROGRESS Center.

Those are all our recommendations for today. I think we're moving into questions now.

[Slide 69- Questions] **Tessie Bailey:** Yeah, so we'll move into questions, and I want to encourage attendees that if you have any questions or comments, we'd love to hear it. You can use the chat box that's down at the bottom. You'll also see the Q&A, and that will just come to me and I can ask those questions to our panel.

And I just want to say, Joey, one of the things that you mentioned in your section, I just want to reiterate, is this idea of belonging and inclusion. I was just looking at how the parents didn't really indicate that they felt their kids had as much opportunities for belonging, but it looked like the



students had indicated they felt like they were more included. So I don't know if you can just share a little bit about some of the things you all got around this idea of belonging and inclusion for students.

Joey Hunziker: Yeah, I would say generally the young adult and student responses were a bit more positive, focusing on their experiences in school. They definitely had suggestions of what could be improved, and they commented quite a lot on -- they felt that teachers and schools were there to support them, but was it individualized, was it really focusing on their needs and what they wanted after high school?

Something we heard from the young adults was that they felt included in the classroom and that was great, but what about the wider school community? And that was a little hard to parse out, because we didn't ask specifically about some of those details, but many of them felt comfortable going a little bit deeper into that. And if folks read the paper, you'll see a little bit more of that nuance that we didn't necessarily cover here.

Tessie Bailey: Yeah, and I think that's something that's been emerging with the PROGRESS Center resources you mentioned and the TIES Center, is really promoting belonging, which does go beyond the inclusion with instructional supports within a classroom, that kids feel part of that community. And I think COVID has really highlighted that for us. So thanks for sharing that.

And Stacy, I don't know if you want to add something to that, because I know you shared the parents' perspective around their kids being included and feeling like they belong just wasn't really the same. So that kind of stuck out to me.

Stacy Hirt: Yeah, I was just going to repeat what Joey said. That one divergent there, but if you talk to families and you ask them what they thought was more important, they would say: I want to be included and part of the development of the IEP. When you talk to students, not one student shared I wished my parent was more involved in the IEP. Not one. So I thought that was an interesting finding it didn't emerge from our data there in the chart, but--

Tessie Bailey: Well, I'm curious, you have different lenses, right? Stacy you're coming from the knowledge development, from the PROGRESS Center, and Joey coming from NCLD, I'm curious if there were some survey findings that really stuck out to you that were either surprising or alarming or validating? And Joey we'll start with you.

Joey Hunziker: Yeah, I would say I was struck by -- and I shouldn't be surprised, but I know that parents are on the frontlines fighting for their kids every day -- but I was very surprised by how quickly those focus groups focused on all the negative aspects of school. I understand, it's your lived experience, it's what you're grappling with every day, fighting for your rights, and there are schools that are doing really great things and schools that are struggling to provide the resources and accommodations that students need. But just generally, the students were critical but also much more positive, they had positive, healthy relationships with school-based adults who were focused on them. They wanted things to be a little more individualized and really tailored to what their hopes and dreams and interests were, but I think that was one thing that really stood out to me.



Many of the parent focus groups went way past time, they were very chatty, very interested in sharing their experiences and many of them had very important revelatory experiences that I think we tried to put in this research brief. I think those were the things that stuck out for me.

Stacy Hirt: One other thing that stuck out for the findings of the students, if you were to ask them what made you successful, most of them said just my teacher. I mean, how do you quantify that in an IEP? And others just said a small group and extended time, they said that's all they needed to feel successful, that was more at the secondary level. I thought that was interesting.

Tessie Bailey: So there was a question, you had shared a quote, and Joey I think it was in your section, the student made a comment that there's high and low expectations at different times, and I'm wondering if you can expand on, what was meant by that? Like in the context, what were they really referring to?

Joey Hunziker: Yeah, I think students are very perceptive of what we as adults expects of them, right? And we heard from many young adults that they had high expectations from teachers and their schools about how they were performing, and those were often explicit and laid out, whether those be in the IEP or in the informal conversations that teachers have with students.

And then they also spoke to the unspoken or implicit expectations of students, things that you're not able to accomplish, things that you're not provided, or you're not asked to do those things, and students pick up on those very astutely. This population of students are -- in general, this generation has higher incidence of adverse childhood experiences, higher rates of depression and anxiety and mental health needs. So their experiences in school with stigma and the expectations that are set for them, there's a little more intensity there, I think, and they understand that there's a lot of pressure on them to perform well, and also not be perceived as different, not be pulled out of classrooms for specialized instruction. So they touched on that a lot during the discussions, whether that be those explicit or the implicit expectations.

I work with young adults all the time, and they share similar anecdotes and experiences, so I wasn't completely shocked by this, but I think it is important to understand that students are observing everything every day in school and they know when something is being expected of them or when they feel like they're going to let their teachers down or school folks down, they understand that context.

Tessie Bailey: Thanks for sharing that.

We have a question, this is probably to you, Stacy, it's more of the logistical piece, but it didn't look like all the states were represented. So, if you can just share again why those states were represented in the group, and then just curious about the sizes of school districts like where those folks were coming from, were they primarily from large districts or small districts? And then one last piece, when you said young adults, what was that age group for young adults?

Stacy Hirt: Okay, there's three questions there. One, we did not collect data on the size of the districts, so I don't have that data for you. The majority of our recruitment was in the Northeast and East Coast, because that's where SPAN is located, and as they were working their sphere of influence, a lot of their



networks were in that area. And Joey you can pipe in. That's districts, why recruitment in 16 states, and what was the third?

Tessie Bailey: You mentioned they were young adults, was that seventh grade?

Joey Hunziker: It was actually 18 to 24. We had a couple of students who were 18-year-olds in high school still. So most of them were post-high school, post-that transition process.

Tessie Bailey: And that had a lot to do with consent?

Joey Hunziker: Exactly, yeah.

Tessie Bailey: For accessing, how do we access folks for these conversations it's just really tricky, but also including students. It's really hard to recruit the same number of students and I'm curious, any thoughts -- for those who are looking to do this type of work maybe in their state or their district, any recommendations for how to better recruit students for these types of conversation?

Joey Hunziker: I could talk all day about this. We have done quite a lot of focus groups and also a lot of our programming with young adults relies on recruiting young adults who identify as having a disability. So they rely on their personal networks, and that source of trust has to be a lot closer than just getting like a social media ad or prompt of some sort.

I would say if you're thinking of engaging young adults or students maybe in the high school range, really thinking about their networks and how to connect them together to find participants. That then does call into question, how wide can you get if you're relying on individual student networks? But I think it's important to know that young adults – that the perception of trust and engaging in something like a discussion like this where you're talking actively about your disability, your experiences in school, there's a bit of vulnerability with that. So relying on close, trusted peers I think is an effective strategy. It's probably one of the reasons why we struggled the most with these, with recruiting young adults. Because we've gotten a pretty wide reach of young adults, many of them filled out the survey, but actually getting them to participate was a little harder, because they wanted who would be involved, and so I think there's a lot to consider as you're thinking about engaging young adults.

Tessie Bailey: Yeah, and I would say that it's probably critical for us to really understand what's working and not working with our systems. I mean, parents are also a valuable resource to understand that, but as you mentioned, it's two different perspectives, right? Like this feeling of inclusion, this feeling of benefit is going to be perceived differently whether you're the recipient or a partner in the development of that program.

So as we close up, I'm curious like what is your biggest takeaway, and I'll ask both of you, from this experience? What do you see as the most critical thing that our participants and others who are listening to this really need to take away from this? We'll start with you, Stacy.

Stacy Hirt: I think the big piece is just communication and collaboration. I think that's one piece you can't quantify regardless of the size of your district, or right now with the teacher shortage, some of



our educators don't have the understanding or the how that any teacher regardless of if it's a first year teacher or 30 years can communicate and open those lines of communication.

Joey Hunziker: I would say, young adults really want inclusion, and I think that's a broad term. They don't want to just be sitting in the room when their IEP is created, they want to make sure that it is aligned to their desires and what they want to do after school and what they think are their strengths. There's a lot of work out there about strengths-based IEPs.

I would imagine that there's probably a big difference between what an educator might think of a student's strengths and what they think of as their strengths. That could be a whole other stream of research, actually, but building on their perceptions of themselves in schools is really important, both because it empowers them, but also it helps them learn self-advocacy skills which are essential after school, during school, to be-- How do I say it? We have a very ableist society. Students with disabilities unfortunately have to be their biggest self-advocates, because parents can't be when they're in college, they can't be there when they're going into their first jobs, they need to develop those skills. And that's what they're asking for, they're asking for the opportunity to be included, to be listened to and to, have our systems be responsive to what they need.

Tessie Bailey: Thank you. So just one last logistical question, Stacy, are there any plans to do focus groups with educators?

[Slide 70- Educator Focus Groups] Stacy Hirt: Yes, it's funny you ask. I'm hosting one tonight. We are recruiting educators so if you're on right now, please scan the QR code. We have about 50 educators signed up right now, our goal is 100. I'll be hosting educator focus groups through May. So, if there's a time when you scan the QR code that's not available, go ahead and sign up and I'll follow up with you via email. These educator focus groups are roughly over an hour, we will get you in and out on time, but really we want to hear about what's going well, what's not, what are the successes that you're experiencing in your district, what are the challenges? We are specifically looking for gen ed, special ed, related service providers and administrators. If you just have an hour over the next six weeks and can pipe in, we will award you with \$50. You don't have to spend it in the classroom, you can take yourself to dinner. So please sign up, we would love to hear from you.

[Slide 71- Additional Resources] Tessie Bailey: Thanks, Stacy. Well, we're going to close up our session today. I just want to share a couple of resources.

[Slide 72- NCLD Resources] As you heard from Joey today, the National Center for Learning Disabilities is a great resource. A lot of advocacy work, helping students really understand, as Joey mentioned, what they can do to self-advocate and how parents and educators can support that.

[Slide 73- Self-Paced Modules] We had mentioned the IEP tip sheets, and I just want to share that there are supplementary self-paced modules that go with that. Joey mentioned a couple around learning about the special education laws. These are designed to help you understand just the basics. So whether you're an educator, a service provider working at the state or local level, you really have a good, basic understanding of what are the requirements under IDEA, both from the development of



the IEP but as well as the implementation piece. What are the requirements for the overall act itself?

[Slide 74- PROGRESS Resources to Support the Development of High-Quality Educational Programming] And the IEP tip sheets I mentioned, if you look on the website, which is www.promotingprogress.org, you will see that there are a number of tip sheets to help with the development of the IEP. These are great resources to also share with families, so we can all be on the same page around the individual components as well as the IEP as a single document.

[Slide 75- Find Your Parent Center] And then I highly recommend connecting and being aware of your parent hub, even if you are an educator, they're great partners in helping ensure that there are information and tools that you can share with your parents and vice versa. We are in this together. There's no way the school can do this on their own and there's no way parents can as well. And we want to make sure that we're all collectively being advocates. And you can see in the chat box Amy put the link to the parent centers.

[Slide 76- Staying Connected with the PROGRESS Center] I also want to encourage you to stay connected with us, we have a very active Facebook and Twitter. You can follow us at @K12progress. I also recommend signing up for the newsletter. So the results with the educator focus groups, new resources, new modules, those will all be outlined in that newsletter. It doesn't come too frequently but just frequently enough to stay on top of things.

I want to thank you for participating in today's webinar and we look forward to hearing from you on future webinars. Please be sure to take a moment to finalize our survey or access our survey. You can see that in the lower right-hand corner and it shouldn't take very long and if you have any feedback about future webinars, we would appreciate it. Have a great evening and enjoy your upcoming weekend.

