

**High School Application and Placement for
Chicago Public School Students with Disabilities**

A research project supported by Raise Your Hand for Illinois Public Education

www.ilraiseyourhand.org



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Executive Summary

Transitioning to High School is a challenging and critical time for all students, but particularly for students with disabilities (SWD). This report examines the range of educational services and school options for SWD transitioning into High School as well as the experiences of parents searching for and selecting an appropriate school for their children. Parents of SWD struggle to understand how to access the most appropriate educational environment for High School in Chicago Public Schools (CPS). There are concrete ways that the CPS District, individual schools and families can improve this process.

Key Findings

- Finding information about High School programs for SWD is incredibly difficult.
- There is a lack of quality indicators for parents of SWD to make school selections.
- CPS families and staff lack understanding about the High School placement process for SWD.
- Transition planning is an opportunity for improving High School application and placement for SWD.
- Test scores as a primary admission criteria for High Schools reduce school options for SWD.
- Parents of SWD want equitable access to a safe High School that has a high-quality academic environment, respect and support for individual need, and a culture of inclusion and acceptance.
- Improvement will require efforts by the District, as well as by individual schools and families.

Recommendations

CPS/District Level

1. Develop a set of quality indicators for monitoring Special Education (SPED) programs at the individual school level.
2. Clearly define how the required transition planning process can inform, direct and guide students in High School application and placement.
3. Create a training protocol for Elementary School Case Managers and Counselors to understand the High School application and placement process for students with SPED needs.
4. Allow IEP teams to decide if NWEA test scores are an appropriate criteria to use for placement in High School programs.
5. Develop a publicly accessible, searchable database that includes: all High School programs at a given school; application and acceptance criteria for each program; facilities information; extracurricular activities available; and types of SPED classrooms available.
6. Clarify the process for High School placement for students with extensive support needs.

CPS High Schools (including charter, contract and speciality)

1. Plan for appropriate access to High School tours and open houses for SWD.
2. Be transparent about SPED programming.
3. Create orientation programming specifically for incoming SWD.

CPS Elementary Schools

1. Create a school-based plan for training staff on transition planning.
2. Discuss the High School placement process in all middle school IEP meetings.
3. Share ALL possible options for High School in 7th grade.
4. Support families to create a plan for High School placement.
5. Create meaningful and specific short-term and long-term transition plans.
6. Partner with High Schools to create orientation plans for students with SPED needs as they transition to High School.

CPS Parents of Students With Disabilities

1. Learn about the High School placement process.
2. Demand meaningful and specific short-term and long-term transition plans.
3. Create a plan for High School visits with your student.
4. Learn about your rights and responsibilities.

Overview

In the summer of 2018, a task force was assembled with support from Raise Your Hand (RYH) to better understand the process of High School application and placement as it pertained to students with disabilities. The workgroup was co-chaired by a professional education consultant and a university professor in special education and supported by dedicated CPS parents. Contributing members for this all volunteer research project are listed in [Appendix A](#).

While the application and selection process for neurotypical students is public, parents of SWD struggle to understand what options are open to their students and how to access the most appropriate educational environment. These families are also often left out of the decision making process for student placement due to lack of information about all available options, lack of clarity around the selection process for particular programs as they are not informed of all options available, and barriers to access created by CPS schools.

Many have suggested that the lack of readily accessible information as well as some of the processes used for High School placement of SWD can be both unfair and discriminatory. Legally, these students should be placed in the most appropriate and least restrictive educational setting and given access to understanding all programs for which they might apply and be selected. Most importantly, a fully articulated transition plan, as required by law, should serve as the basis for the process. The following documents, provided by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), are helpful in understanding of the transition planning process.

- [ISBE SPP Indicator 13: Secondary Transition IDEA: Transition Age 14½ and Beyond](#) (Appendix B)
- [ISBE Scoring Rubric for Indicator 13 \(to use in transition meeting\)](#) (Appendix C)

The following questions initially guided the research process:

- What programs are available for SWD in CPS?
- How do families understand program options for their student with an IEP?
- What is the process and criteria used to place students with IEPs in specific programs?
- What is important to parents in securing an appropriate placement?
- What challenges do parents face in securing an appropriate placement?

While these questions defined the initial process, the research resulted in four main themes for sharing the results:

- High School Programs for SWD Available in CPS
- High School Application and Placement for SWD Available in CPS
- Appropriate Goals and Current Challenges with High School Placement of SWD in CPS
- Processes Used By Other Districts

Research results are followed by a set of recommendations for the District as well as for CPS High Schools, CPS Elementary Schools and Parents of SWD.

Methods

Initially, the workgroup met to divide research tasks among members. Some volunteers interviewed Elementary School Case Managers, while others did online research or requested information through email or by phone. Once collected, information was analyzed to provide deeper understanding about the High School placement process for SWD.

A survey was sent out through all of RYH's social media channels, requesting responses from parents of SWD currently in 7th-10th grades. The survey asked parents to share their opinions on needs and challenges encountered in the current system of High School application, selection and placement. The survey was distributed via email and social media to parents throughout the RYH network. Fifty respondents, representing a diverse array of neighborhoods from CPS schools throughout Chicago, shared their views of the CPS High School application/placement process during the period of October 8-22, 2018.

To better understand the survey's results, the workgroup conducted a focus group. The focus group took place on December 7 at the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago and was facilitated by a professor of special education (co-chair of the workgroup) with expertise in qualitative research. Five parents whose children with a disability were in 8th grade and were applying to High Schools or whose child had transitioned to High School in 2018 participated in the focus group.

Results from all research tasks, including the survey and focus group, were analyzed and compiled for review. The taskforce discussed all results in order to create a set of recommendations for multiple stakeholder groups: the District, High Schools, Elementary Schools and parents of SWD. Finally, a draft of the report was shared with a larger, online group of parents of SWD in CPS schools for feedback.

This report has a few limitations. First, it may not cover all SWD. The survey did not ask participants about the disability of their child nor about the range of needs that may guide the High School search. Thus, our findings may apply to certain students with disabilities but not others. It is important to note the wide variety of student abilities encompassed by the label of SWD and note that each student has very different needs and strengths. Second, the report does not address the experiences of parents of students with 504 plans. Third, the sample of the survey is a small percentage of all SWD transitioning to High Schools. Yet the survey findings were strengthened by the findings from focus groups and the task force participants' own research into the information and services available for parents of SWD transitioning into High School. Finally, we did not interview or survey SWD to understand their experiences and point of view of the High School selection and application process. Future reports should foreground the voices of SWD.

Findings

High School Programs for Students With Disabilities Available in CPS

Types of Programs

Federal law describes transition planning as part of the IEP process, yet parents and even Case Managers are not clear about what programs are accessible to students and what barriers/accommodations prevent or extend access. It is critical to remember that SWD must be guided based on an assessment of their strengths and potential abilities in order to be successful in their post-secondary life. For this reason, every transition team needs to be aware of any and all programs that might guide students into potential career tracks or high-interest areas that provide opportunities and motivation for greater success.

While there are fewer High Schools than Elementary Schools in Chicago, there are still an overwhelming range of HS options within CPS. Among these are IB, military, arts and selective academics. Particularly confusing are the different eligibility criteria for each program. Some programs require an interview, some require attendance at an information session, some require an audition, essay or portfolio review. Most concerning, many of them require that students have achieved a specific cut score on their NWEA exams in order to have the opportunity to apply for a specific program or students who have higher NWEA scores are given priority in the program offer and acceptance process.

Challenges in Understanding High School Programs Available in CPS

Workgroup members assigned to uncover the myriad of High School options within CPS were initially overwhelmed by the task. The challenge in identifying both program options as well as criteria for application is likely the most important finding of this research. Even for students without IEPs, it is incredibly difficult to find information about all High School options within CPS. One workgroup member garnered cheers when she stumbled into this listing, which was seemingly buried on the GoCPS site. Even the Case Managers we interviewed were not able to direct us to this document. The itemization of High School options and application and acceptance criteria can be found on pages 5 through 48 of a document that is accessed through a link entitled “High School Supplemental Document” that appears just below the “Paper Application” link on the “Apply To High School Programs” page on the GoCPS website (hereinafter referred to as the “CPS HS Program List”): [HS-Supplemental-Document](#) (Appendix D)

Parents participating in the focus groups referred to the information provided (or lack of) in the GoCPS site. For instance, one of the participants commented on the usefulness of the school data provided by GoCPS site:

“Yeah, or some test score stuff, which, to me, I don’t think that you can necessarily judge a school by its test scores cuz you could have a really fantastic school that doesn’t have the greatest test scores for a variety of reasons or a really crappy school for a diverse learner who has fantastic test scores”

Another parent made a comment about the information provided on the accessibility of schools:

“Are there elevators? Cuz they can have the greatest school in the world for a kid with special needs. If they can’t get up and down the stairs or at least have an aide.”

Parents did not dismiss the academic ranking of a school when making school decisions, but they were assertive in noting the lack of relevance this quality indicator can have for parents of students with disabilities, particularly those with more extensive support needs. Lack of access to information relevant for SWD is a critical flaw in the application process for CPS High Schools. It defeats any effort to provide “school choice”, as key to this educational reform is parent access to information about schools so that they may make an informed decision.

Challenges in Understanding Program Access for Students With Disabilities

The process for understanding High School options is overwhelming for all CPS students, but it is even more difficult to understand what is available for SWD. Often, even High School open houses do not provide any information on programming options for SWD. Transition teams (including parents) need to understand greater detail about offerings at High Schools in order to make decisions on where to apply. This includes access to the Least Restrictive Environment with respect to services, service delivery models, academic format and access to career pathways that are most appropriate, given the nature of the student’s disability.

The role of the school Counselor or Case Manager was a recurring theme discussed by parents in the focus group. One of the participating parents stated:

“The counselor at my son’s grammar school was helpful to a certain degree, but I felt like she couldn’t always tell us everything we wanted to know either because she didn’t know, or I feel like there were times when she even said, “We’re not supposed to tell you this, but...”

Parents participating in the focus groups and survey mentioned that the school counselors did not know all possible placement options for children with disabilities, and that in some cases some information was treated as a secret just to be shared with a few. School Counselors and Case Managers need to play a key role supporting parents and SWD while selecting a school. To reach the potential of their role, they need to be highly knowledgeable about all programs and schools in CPS. Of course, this information needs to be transparent for all parents.

Programs for Students with Extensive Support Needs

Our workgroup was unable to identify a listing of the varied cluster programs contained within CPS High Schools. Many CPS High Schools have self-contained classrooms that serve a small number of SWD within specific categorical areas. The CPS website does list four specialty learning/transition centers (Vaughn, Northside Learning Center, Ray Graham, and Southside Occupational). Parents of students with the need for greater service options are also entitled to full transparency regarding options available to their children and to school choice with respect to placement.

High School Application/Placement for Students With Disabilities in CPS

High School Application Process

The Chicago Public School system for High School placement is highly unusual among districts across the nation. Typically, students across the country proceed from their Elementary Schools to a designated neighborhood High School and attendance is based on the geographic neighborhood where the student resides. In Chicago, however, there is a system of “school choice” that allows 8th grade students an incredible range of options in theory. In practice, the amount of “choice” a student has depends largely on their NWEA test scores from 7th grade.

The application process for High School has been streamlined through the GoCPS system (a new online portal that all students applying to CPS High Schools must use), but modifications to the system need to be made to provide equal access to SWD. It is unclear to families, Case Managers and Counselors what exceptions are allowed and what restrictions must be kept in mind when considering application options for SWD. All Case Managers and Counselors need training on GoCPS as well as clear explanations on how to provide access to additional options for SWD.

High School Application Planning in Transition Plan Meetings

For SWD, transition teams need full understanding of programming available, including programs related to specific student strengths or interests. Programs that prepare students for particular vocational paths based on interest should be clearly understood and considered as part of the transition plan. While transition plans are required by law, standards need to be set and monitored more carefully. Elements of the plan must be communicated to parents in order for all transition team members to fully understand what is required to provide an appropriate educational environment for High School.

In addition to providing more access to information about the process, CPS needs to allow for exceptions to application criteria dependent on a student’s disability. One example of this is that NWEA scores may not be an appropriate criteria for student access if their disability affects their ability to perform well on standardized tests. All members of the transition team must be informed about potential adjustments to application criteria that can be made due to a student’s disability.

Application Options and Constraints as Described by CPS

Researchers at the University of Illinois at Chicago conducted a descriptive analysis of High School options using information found in the CPS HS Program List found on the GoCPS website (noted above as [Appendix D](#)). The researchers found it difficult to understand the presentation of various application and admission requirements, which further illustrates the obstacles parents face when trying to understand school options.

Through analysis of the CPS HS Program List, the incredible weight given to test scores is clearly a barrier to High School program access for SWD. Of the 298 CPS High Schools listed in the CPS HS Program List, 111 or 37% included a list of specifically stated application requirements. Primarily, application requirements included: test scores, grades, attendance percentages, and information sessions.

- Ninety-four schools (31%) require and consider NWEA scores in the application.
- Fifty-nine schools (20%) request information about students' previous grades and all fifty-nine schools have a minimum GPA requirement.
- Eighty schools (27%) require potential students to meet more than one threshold to apply.
- Thirty-nine schools (13%) mandate students report their attendance record.
- Twenty-eight schools (9%) require parents to attend an in-person information session.
- Only 11 schools (4%) required an admission test, 10 schools (3%) required interviews, 2 schools (1%) required an essay, and 2 schools (1%) required letters of recommendation.

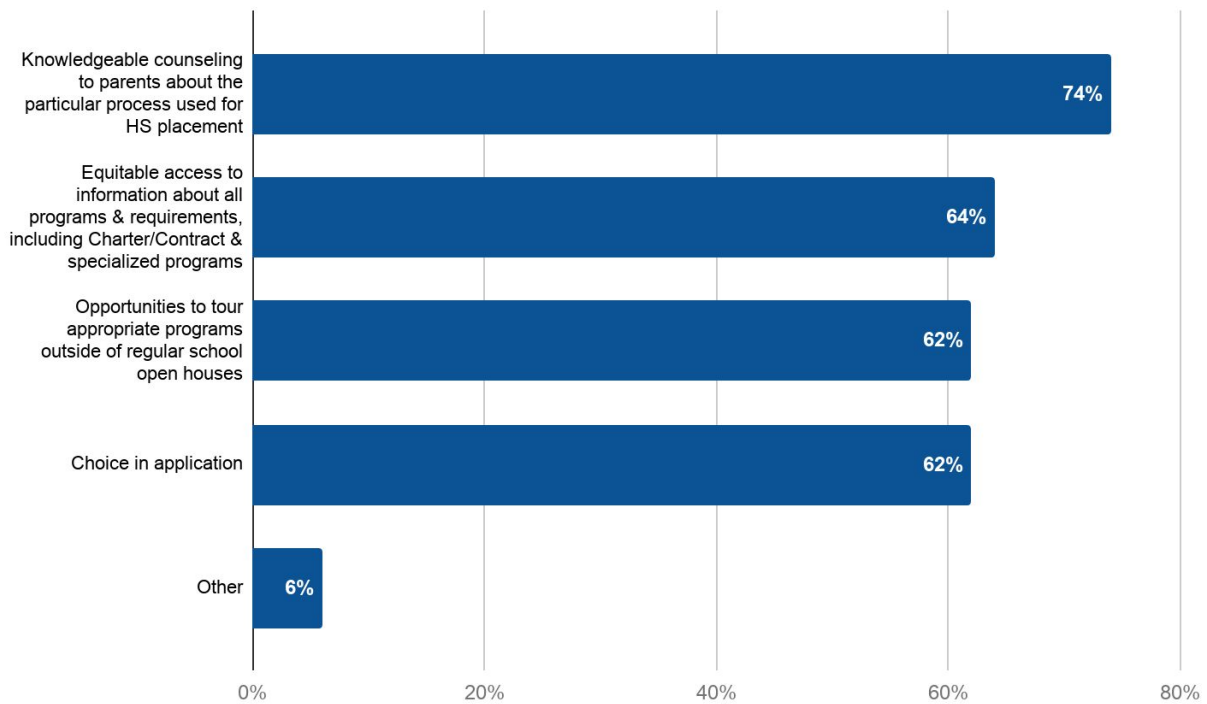
All the above requirements can be obstacles for parents of SWD applying to High School and can significantly reduce the school options for SWD. Indeed, NWEA scores can be a barrier to appropriate placement for SWD, as 31% of programs require a minimum 7th Grade NWEA score in order to even *apply*, even when that NWEA score may be a direct result of their disability.

What is Important to Parents with respect to High School *application*?

The survey conducted for this report allowed a wide range of parents to share their opinions on the High School application process. Overwhelmingly, parents/guardians want to be fully informed about the High School placement process for their children with IEPs. This includes knowledgeable counseling about the application process, equitable access to information about all programs and requirements, open houses appropriate to their child's need, and choice in application. Table 1 provides detail about what is most important to parents. Students who do not perform according to standards on assessment will find their High School program options drastically reduced.

Table 1

What is MOST important to parents in understanding the High School application process for Students With Disabilities? (check all that apply)



The topic of open houses ignited a vivid discussion during the focus group. Parents commented that open houses are not geared to SWD and open houses presented little information about programs and supports for SWD. A parent, for instance, expressed her frustration in attending a school open house:

“I would also say, ‘Are you giving a special education presentation? Is there—,’ and they’d say, ‘Oh, no, the case manager’s not here.’ Well, it’s like, why would that be? Why would that be? There’s got to be a number of people who would be interested in the special education services. How is the case manager not here—or someone with knowledge not here on open house day when that is technically the only day that you can come in?”

Another parent, also expressed their dissatisfaction with school open houses:

“They didn’t have the breadth of the information I was looking for. When they’re planning those open houses and things like that, the special education students are an afterthought, if at all.”

Parents offered a solution:

“We need a separate SPED open house so that we can see the classroom.”

Attending an open house can be a stressful event, particularly for some SWD. Waiting in line outside the school to attend the tour, being surrounded by dozens of other youth, and sitting in an auditorium to listen to a presentation is often not the most welcoming environment for SWD. Providing small sized tours, accessible rooms and presentations, relevant information for SWD, and short breaks to process and digest information can contribute to a more useful school tour for SWD and their parents.

High School Admittance and Placement Process

Understanding the placement process is a critical aspect in deciding where students should apply for High School. Most students use the online system, GoCPS, asking them to register and prioritize their options for High School. Again, test scores are the most limiting factor in the number of options available to any student.

Analysis of the [CPS HS Program List](#) also gives information about the admissions processes used by various CPS schools. For the two most prevalent *acceptance* methods, the lottery system and point system, NWEA scores figure heavily.

- In 176 schools (59%) a lottery system with preference is used to select applicants. In a typical lottery system a computer randomly selects qualified applicants from a list, meant to give all applicants an equal chance of being admitted. In a lottery system with preference, certain characteristics make a student more likely to be chosen such as having a sibling currently enrolled or NWEA scores within the school's target range.
- In 104 schools (35%) a point system was used to assign a value to data points such as: NWEA reading percentile, NWEA math percentile, and 7th Grade reading, math, science, social studies grades to form a combined score.

Application criteria aside, some schools use different benchmarks or cut scores for selecting SWD among those applying to a given program. This information should be available to all transition team members (including parents) in the same way that it is available to parents of neurotypical students.

Selective Enrollment High Schools --- A Placement Case Example

For example, many parents of SWD are unaware that there is a separate process for the selection of SWD in selective enrollment High Schools. While Tiers 1-4 provide access along a different set of cut scores based on the neighborhood where a student lives, there is an additional "Tier 5" for SWD. SWD compete in their own pool for spots at these schools. The number of available spots is determined along legal guidelines for disability access and then SWD compete only against other SWD for the spots at these schools. Thus, SWD have different selection criteria than neurotypical students selected for these schools.

Transition Plan Needs

The purpose of the transition plan is to identify the specific path to maximizing independence and success for a student with a disability before they exit the public school system. Placement decisions should take into account all of the information collected in the transition planning process, including career surveys and strength assessments. Interest in college or vocational paths should be an aspect of placement decisions for SWD.

Programs for Students with Extensive Support Needs

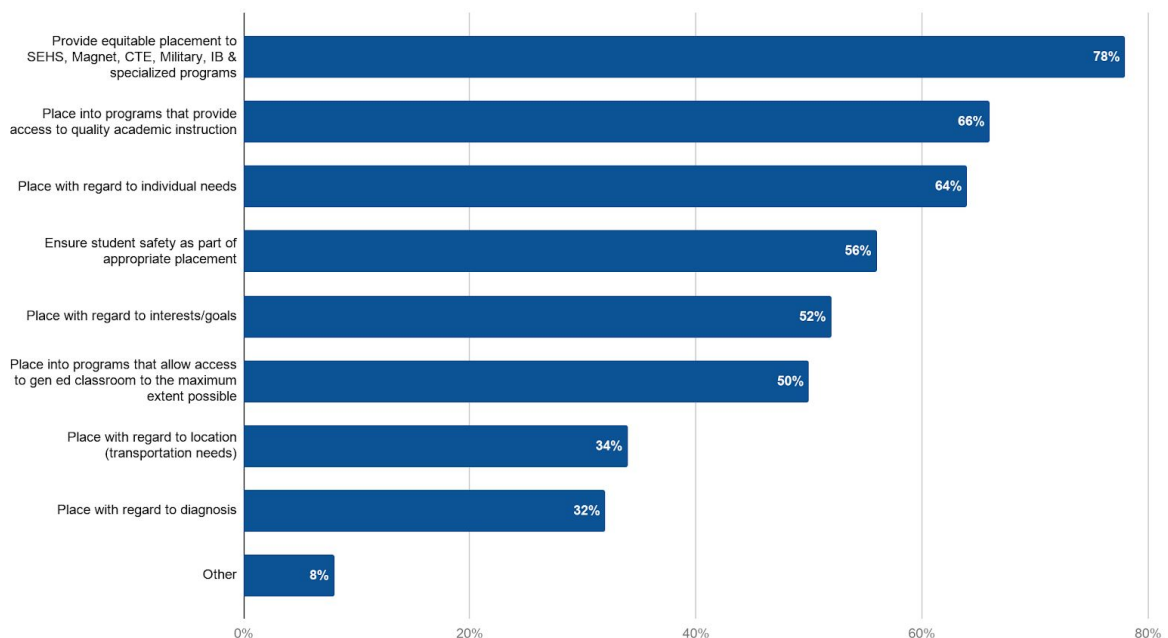
High School placement for students with greater service needs is a very different process. Parents have limited voice in the process as placement decisions are made by the CPS Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services (ODLSS). A placement IEP meeting is held no later than December 1st of the 8th grade year and the IEP team submits requests for placement criteria in December. A District Representative should be in attendance at the placement meeting and that representative should have observed the child prior to the placement meeting. It is very difficult to negotiate a new placement once ODLSS has assigned placement, so it is critical that the fall placement meeting is done appropriately. Placement decisions are sent out via letter in the spring of the student's 8th grade year.

What is Important to Parents with respect to High School *placement*?

Again, the survey for this project provides detail on parent opinions. Equitable High School placement (to all CPS school types) and quality academic instruction were the most important factors for parents/guardians of children with IEPs, in terms of securing an appropriate High School placement. Additionally, they want placement based on student needs, interests, and goals. Student safety is also valued by the majority of respondents. These results are described in Table 2 below.

Table 2

What is MOST important to parents in securing an appropriate placement for their High School child with an IEP? (check all that apply)



Parents in the focus group shared similar factors that were important to them at the time of selecting and securing a High School placement for their children. An interesting recurring theme was that of school culture. Parents mentioned that they look for schools where their children will be accepted

and treated as part of the school community. When asked to describe a “good” school culture, parents stated:

“It’s diverse, which I like. It’s small... got a family feel, and the teachers seem invested. The kids seem, for the most part, like they like to be there.”

Yet, a welcoming school culture is not enough, as one parent stated:

“You wanna see that there’s a good mesh of both, that it’s a good culture, and that the academics and the teaching strategies are gonna be really great for your child... that they have the appropriate supports and services for each child’s needs.”

Safety was also of great concern for parents as they thought their children with a disability are more susceptible to experience bullying. One parent stated during the focus group:

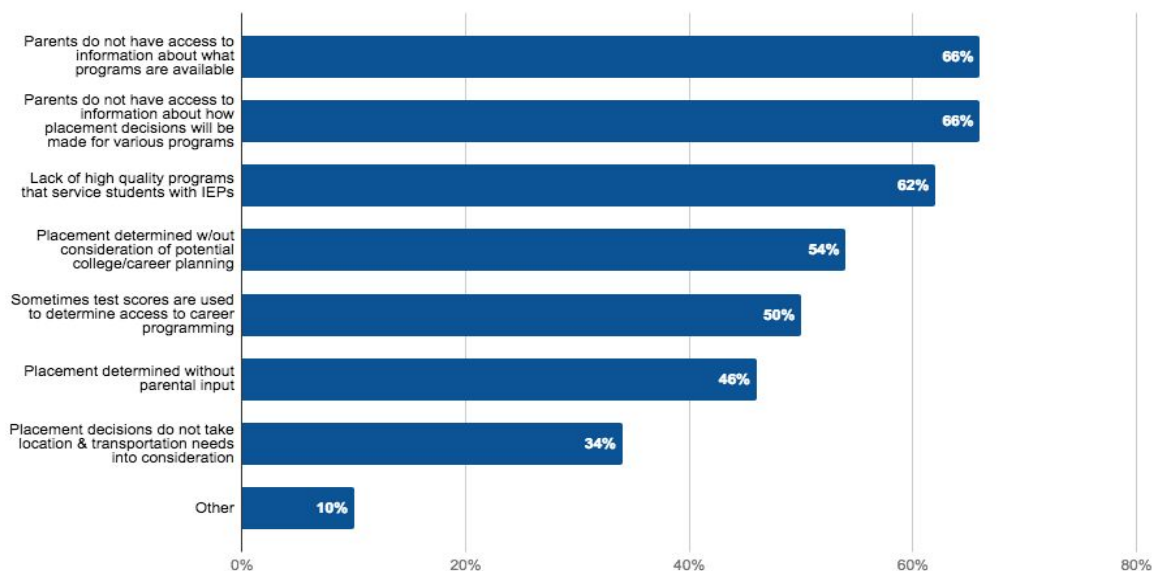
“The safety factor because he’s still—he can talk. He can engage in a full conversation like anyone else, but he still does not have that ability to understand those underlying words that somebody’s sayin’ that he’s gonna be in danger.”

Appropriate Goals and Current Challenges with High School Placement of Students With Disabilities in CPS

Parents surveyed by this project were asked what the biggest challenges they faced in High School placement were. Table 3 shares the results of this question.

Table 3

What are the BIGGEST challenges parents face in securing an appropriate placement for their High School child? (check all that apply)



In addition, parents provided a clear outline of the major hurdles to the current system of High School placement for SWD through more detailed responses. Open-ended survey items were analyzed, resulting in the following list of key challenges:

1. There is currently a lack of options and choice available to SWD as compared to their neurotypical peers. One of the biggest barriers to options is a lack of understanding by families, directly stemming from a lack of communication and transparency by CPS.
 - Parents need information available about HS options for SWD, including how placement is determined.
 - Parents need information about how services are provided for SWD within available HS programs.
 - Families need options for open houses/touring of appropriate programs.
2. Another issue that prevents SWD from access to appropriate programming is the over-reliance on NWEA scores. In particular, a student's disability may have a direct impact on their ability to demonstrate their abilities through the NWEA test. The use of these scores is not appropriate in all settings and should be evaluated as a potential criteria for eligibility as part of the transition/IEP process.
 - SWD should have access to alternative criteria/assessments for eligibility beyond NWEA scores for SWD if disability affects test performance.
 - Interviews or a portfolio of work/grades are possible alternative assessments.
3. As a critical part of transition planning, High School placement for SWD should be done with full understanding of student strengths and interests, alongside realistic post-secondary goals.
4. Families with students in cluster programs/low incidence disability also deserve choice and understanding of all available options. They need to be fully included in placement decisions.

Processes Used by Other Districts

A cursory review of the New York, Boston and Houston websites was undertaken to contextualize the work of CPS in both High School placement and Special Education. In summary, there is no definitive procedure of how a student with an IEP moves from 8th grade to 9th grade on any of the three major city districts websites. However, New York and Boston Public Schools both state that ALL students have the right to apply for ALL High Schools.

New York Public Schools:

New York Public Schools has the most information about transitioning to High School.

- The District has extensive information about its special education services:
<https://www.schools.nyc.gov/special-education/help/talking-about-disability>
- They also provide specific advice for transition from Elementary School to High School, including specific advice about the High School application process for SWD:
<https://www.schools.nyc.gov/special-education/preschool-to-age-21/moving-to-high-school>

Boston Public Schools:

Boston Public Schools appear to have a strong commitment to Inclusive Schools:

<https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/domain/249>

Houston Public Schools:

The website for Houston Public Schools is incredibly limited, there is no information on any SPED programs or their High School placement process.

Recommendations

CPS/District Level

- 1. Develop a set of quality indicators for monitoring SPED at the individual school level.**
 - a. Include both opportunities (e.g., learning supports, services, opportunities for inclusion) and outcomes.
 - b. Include both parents and researchers in development of indicators.

- 2. Clearly define how High School application and placement can be described within the required transition planning process.**
 - a. Improve accountability for quality in transition planning.
 - b. Emphasize the connection between identification of student strengths to post-secondary planning and thus the importance of appropriate High School placement.

- 3. Create a training protocol for Elementary School Case Managers and Counselors to understand the High School application and placement process in the following areas.**
 - a. Require IEP teams to connect the High School application and acceptance process to thoughtful transition planning.
 - b. Provide training on the parent interface of the GoCPS website.
 - c. Provide training on the programs available and application and acceptance requirements of each program.
 - d. Provide training on differences in criteria or process for students who have SPED needs.

- 4. Allow IEP teams to decide if NWEA test scores are an appropriate criteria to use for placement in High School programs (outside of academically rigorous SEHS, IB and Honors programs).**
 - a. Require IEP team to plan for a replacement criteria for High School application.
 - b. Use grades, portfolio of work, or interview as possible replacement criteria.

- 5. Develop a publicly accessible, searchable database for High School programs.**
 - a. Include all High School programs at a given school and application and acceptance criteria for each program.
 - b. Include facilities information, such as pools, tracks, sporting fields, stadiums auditoriums, art, music and dance studios, etc.
 - c. Include SPED-specific search criteria, such as ADA accessibility, the type of SPED classrooms available at any given school and accessibility of programs for students with SPED needs who may have lower scores than their typically-functioning peers.

- 6. Clarify process for High School placement for students with extensive support needs**
 - a. Make the list of all programs public.
 - b. Clarify when and why students/families do not use GoCPS for placement.
 - c. Clarify all possible placement options.

CPS High Schools (including charter, contract and speciality)

- 1. Plan for appropriate access to High School tours and open houses for SWD.**
 - a. Create access to separate tours specifically for SWD.
 - b. Develop virtual tours with information about SPED programming.
 - c. Provide information about SPED services on all general tours.
 - d. Provide universal access to school tours (e.g., provide breaks, transcription services during presentations, etc.).

- 2. Be transparent about SPED programming**
 - a. Complete, and make available, the Continuum of Services Checklist in [Appendix E](#).
 - b. Share checklist with all Elementary School Case Managers and Counselors.

- 3. Create orientation programming specifically for incoming SWD.**
 - a. Offer shadow days or tours after acceptance.
 - b. Support 8th grade IEP meetings to create LRE grid that mirrors the reality of High School classes, see [Appendix F](#) for an example LRE grid.
 - c. Specifically describe role of SECA in High School if applicable.

CPS Elementary Schools

- 1. Create a school-based plan for training staff on transition planning.**
 - a. Train all LBS and SECAs on High School placement process.
 - b. Focus on identifying needs, strengths and post-secondary goals.

- 2. Discuss High School placement process in all middle school IEP meetings.**
 - a. In 6th grade, explicitly communicate the importance of grades and standardized test scores in 7th grade (if applicable).
 - b. In 7th grade, encourage attendance at High School open houses and discuss High School needs.
 - c. In 8th grade, review process for application and placement and determine if additional support is needed for parents to understand and access the High School placement process.

- 3. Share ALL possible options for High School in 7th grade.**
 - a. Determine options based on needed support (including students with extensive needs)
 - b. Determine options based on student strengths and high-interest subjects.
 - c. Include discussion of High School Diploma versus Certificate of Completion.

- 4. Support families to create a plan for High School placement.**
 - a. Make a list of appropriate possibilities.
 - b. Visit appropriate High Schools.

- 5. Create meaningful and specific short-term and long-term transition plans.**
 - a. Connect transition plan to High School application and placement.
 - b. Use realistic, thoughtful and motivating post-secondary goals.

- 6. Partner with High School to create orientation plan for transition to High School.**
 - a. Provide shadow days or tours after acceptance.
 - b. Create LRE grid in 8th grade IEP that mirrors the reality of High School classes.
 - c. Specifically describe the role of a SECA in High School, if applicable.

CPS Parents of Students With Disabilities

- 1. Learn about the High School placement process.**
 - a. Understand your child's needs, strengths and interests.
 - b. Create a list of appropriate High Schools in 7th grade with support from your IEP Team.

- 2. Demand meaningful and specific short-term and long-term transition plans.**
 - a. Base plan on student needs, strengths and post-secondary goals, using the Transition Checklist in [Appendix G](#).
 - b. Include discussion of options for appropriate High School placement.

- 3. Create a plan for visiting High Schools with your student.**
 - a. Attend school tours or information sessions in 7th grade/early 8th grade.
 - b. Plan for your child to visit and complete orientation after placement.

- 4. Learn about your rights and responsibilities.**
 - a. Connect with organizations for support (RYH).
 - b. Attend trainings to understand your rights (Family Resource Center on Disabilities).
 - c. Network with other parents about High School options and placement.

[Index of Appendices with Links](#)