Parent Perspectives of Inclusion

Inclusion Perspectives of Parents Who Have Children With and Without Exceptionalities

Pembina Hills Research Project

“...it has nothing to do with children with disabilities and “including” them. I wouldn’t even take into consideration that it wouldn’t include children with disabilities. If I heard this is an inclusive school, from [our town], my first thing is they include every single one of those kids, and this is the [school] family. (Pembina Hills Parent)

Summary of Findings

Parents of Pembina Hills students who submitted a completed survey, report generally positive experiences with their children’s inclusive school environment and links to the local community. However, agreement on all topics related to inclusive education was inconsistent. Some parents thought that certain students might experience greater success in special education placements. Differences in experiences between the parents of children with and those without exceptionals were also reported. Interviews with parents explored these differences in a deeper way. Parents’ perceptions of the school climate directly impacted the ways in which they defined inclusion and vice versa. Within the school climate, parents identified supports critical to their children’s inclusion, as well as several challenges that, at times, got in the way of their children’s inclusion. All parents identified school supports and transition supports as critical to their children’s schooling. The parents of students with exceptionals also focused on disability-specific supports; while the parents of students without exceptionals discussed broader community supports. Further, parents of students with exceptionals described many more challenges to inclusion than the parents of students without exceptionals. It seemed that parents of students with exceptionals experienced more direct challenges; whereas parents of students without disabilities spoke about challenges that were theoretical or external to their experience. When describing their definitions of inclusion, the parents also described their roles within their children’s education and their philosophies about teaching and learning. Parents of students with exceptionals viewed their role as an advocate for their children; whereas parents of students without exceptionals viewed their role as a guide and mentor. The philosophies of parents of students with exceptionals reflected values and relationships, while the philosophies of parents without exceptionals focused on more non-academic topics (e.g., social skills, maturity, coping); whereas parents of students without exceptionals focused most often on academic goals and successes.

Useful Resources

- Collaborating with Families Module (The Iris Centre) - http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/fam/

Special thanks to: