SPECS for Include Me

Program Evaluation of An Innovative Pennsylvania-Wide Teacher Inclusion Mentoring Initiative

Program Evaluation Research Report 2018-2019

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IM Mentoring Model:

- Twenty-one consultants provided mentoring to regular education teachers in the SaS categories, in the areas of Collaboration, Instructional, Physical, Social-Behavioral, and Medical.
- Most frequent consultation/mentoring among IM consultants and teachers were in the areas of Instructional and Social-Behavioral, **with the most time spent on social skills instruction, creating behavior plans, and utilizing peer supports in the classroom.**
- Consultants predominantly used the strategies of verbal feedback and observing
- A continuing trend shows that teacher inclusion practices are related to students' functional skills: at post-test, teachers whose inclusion practices were rated high were more likely to have students who demonstrated higher functioning skills.

Child Benefits:

- Improvement was seen for all students across most functional domains, **with the largest gains in Social-Emotional skills, Self-Regulation, and Technology.**
- Teachers rated the overall academic competence for the majority of students in the middle 40 percent compared to their typical peers.

Teacher and Parent Benefits:

- **Teachers' instructional strategies related to inclusion significantly improved** over the course of the school year. **Largest gains were observed in Expectations and Social Relationships**.
- Pre and post-test surveys showed that parents and teachers improved in their perceptions of inclusion practices over the course of the school year.
- In a survey of key stakeholders, (parents, teachers, and district administrators), **teachers** felt most strongly about the benefits of IM consultation.

Consultant Demographics

Twenty-one consultants/mentors participated in the Include Me program during the 2018-2019 school year. Gender distribution was 16 females and 5 males and their education level is presented in Exhibit 1. The mean years of experience in disabilities education advocacy was 14 years. Fifty-seven percent of the consultants had teaching experience and 33% reported having a child with a disability.

Exhibit 1. Educational level of consultants participating in 2018-2019 school year

Degree	Percentage
Associates	5.00%
Bachelors	43.00%
Some Graduate	19.00%
Masters and Masters +	32.00%

Consultation Monitor Data

The consultation monitor is used to document the scope, intensity, and content of IM consultation and inclusion mentoring with public school teachers and staff. The consultation monitor data reported here is an aggregation of data collected over the past three years. The percentage of effort was calculated by dividing the frequency count of each specific category, topic, or strategy/activity, by the total number implemented over the course of each year. Consultation topics are aligned with the SaS categories. The following exhibits reflect the consultation monitor data collected from 2015-2018.

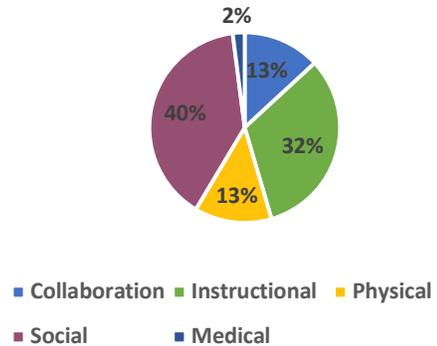*Exhibit 2. Allocation of Consultant Activities across Categories*

Legend: Collaboration, Instructional, Physical, Social, Medical

Exhibit 3. Percent Allocation of Consultant Activities across Collaboration Category

Legend: Team Meetings, Parent Meetings, Professional Development
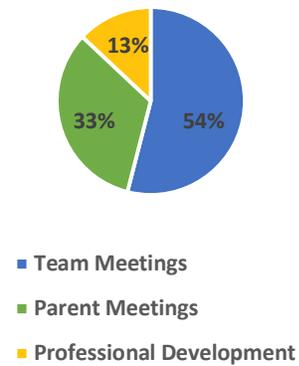
Exhibit 4. Percent Allocation of Consultant Activities across Instruction Category

Legend: Modifying Curriculum, Goals, Tests; Instruction on Functional Routines; Presentation methods + Instructional Adaptations
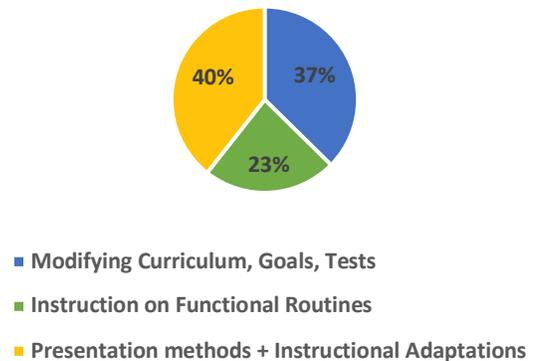
Exhibit 5. Percent Allocation of Consultant Activities across Physical Category

- Sensory Adjustments + Environmental Aids
- Furniture/Seating Arrangements
- Adaptive Equpment/Structural Aids
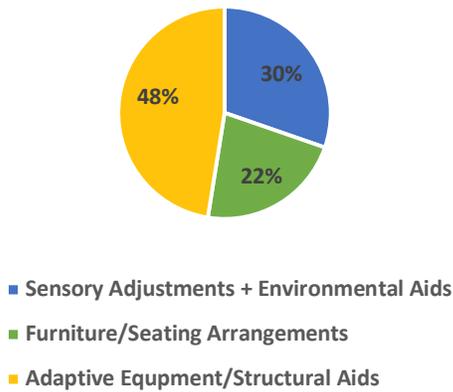
Exhibit 6. Percent Allocation of Consultant Activities across Social Behavioral Category

- Social Skills Instruction
- Behavior Plans, Expectations
- Peer Supports, Coop Learning Strategies

Exhibit 7. Strategies used by Consultants

- Observing
- Inclusion Goal Planning
- Verbal Feedback
- Collecting Resources
- Demonstration/Modeling
- Formal Workshops/Training
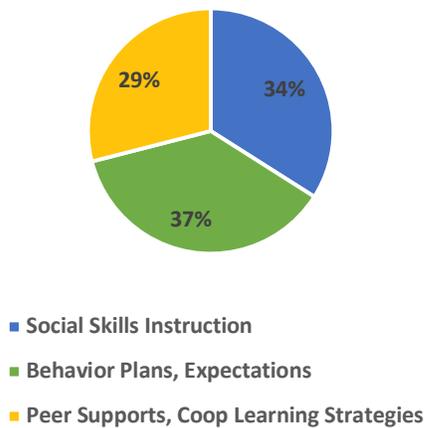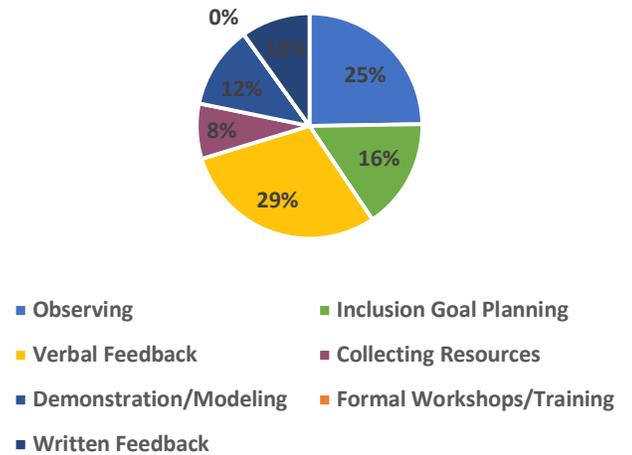- Written Feedback

The data reveal that providing verbal feedback and observing were the predominant strategies used by consultants when supporting and mentoring teachers. Demonstration and modeling, and inclusion goal planning each accounted for roughly 28% of the consultants' efforts. Collecting resources, providing written feedback, and attending formal workshops were activities utilized least, as illustrated in the exhibit *above*. On average, each teacher received approximately 4.23 hours of consultation each month, and a total average of 38.31 each school year. Most of the time was spent in direct contact or face-to-face time between the consultants and teachers and related personnel. In comparison, the other forms of contact (phone, text, email, or written notes) were all utilized to a much lesser extent.

Overall, results indicate that Include Me consultants mentored regular education teachers most frequently on the topics of instructional and social-behavioral issues and less often on physical supports, medical issues, and attending team meetings**. Specifically, the Arc consultants put most of their efforts into working with teachers around social skills instruction, creating behavior plans, and utilizing peer supports in the classroom.**
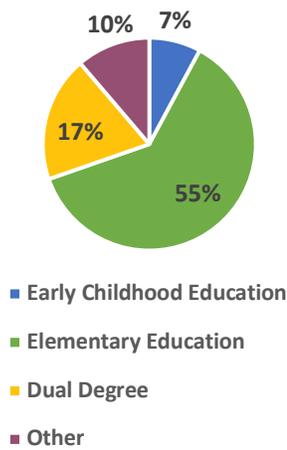
Teacher Demographics

Demographic information was collected for 40 teachers. Over half (55%) of the teachers were between the ages of 22 and 41 years-old. The majority (88%) of teachers identified as White, while 8% reported African American, and 5% American Indian or Alaska Native. Forty-five percent of the teachers had a Master's Degree and nearly half hold a degree in Elementary Education (43%).

Exhibit 8. Teacher Education: Degree

- Bachelors
- Masters
- Some graduate
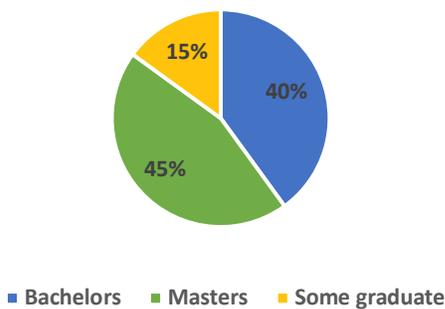
Exhibit 9. Teacher Education: Major

- Early Childhood Education
- Elementary Education
- Dual Degree
- Other

Classroom Effective Practices Inventory (CEPI): Improvements in Teacher Practices

The CEPI is an authentic observational assessment collected by the consultants to determine the extent to which the regular education teachers are engaging in instructional strategies that are aligned with best practices in inclusion.

The CEPI consists of a total of 6 domain-areas which are scored on a Likert scale ranging from 0 (not yet met); 1 (partially met); 2 (usually met); and 3 (fully met). These domains are summarized the table below (Exhibit 10):

Exhibit 10. CEPI Domains and Descriptions

CEPI Domain	Description
Expectations	Observed teacher behavior ('People First' language used; teacher speaks directly to student; teacher uses age-appropriate vocabulary)
Membership & Participation	Characteristics of the classroom environment in terms of accessibility; accommodations; inclusive delivery of services
Instruction & Supports	Types of instructional supports utilized; individualized instruction; data-based decision making
Social Relationships	Support of social interactions such as interaction with peers; building social support networks; strengths-based approach
Communication	Facilitation of communication (student access to different modes of communication; teacher facilitates social communication; respectful communication is used)
Self Determination & Futures Planning	Student participation in goal planning (participates in own IEP meeting; graduation plan; graduation participating

The results of the CEPI analyses showed that teachers' instructional strategies related to inclusion significantly improved over the course of the 2018-2019 school year. A total of 30 CEPI forms were collected at both pre and post-test. Based on the consultants' observations, teachers improved across all domains, with the exception of Self-Determination, with both statistically and educationally significant gains.

Largest gains were observed in expectations and social relationships. It is also worth noting that at post-test, practices associated with nearly all CEPI domains, received an average rating of above 2.0, indicating that there is much evidence of these specific practices observed in the classroom.

Exhibit 11. Mean Gains on the Classroom Effective Practices Inventory

	Expectations*	Membership & Participation*	Instruction & Supports*	Social Relationships*	Communication	Self-Determination & Futures Planning	CEPI Total*
Pre-Test	1.84	1.89	1.86	1.77	2.1	1.77	1.89
Post-Test	2.49	2.36	2.45	2.45	2.68	1.73	2.49

Student Demographics

Demographic information was collected on 32 students during the 2018-2019 school year. The graphs and tables below show the distribution in terms of race/ethnicity, grade, and qualifying diagnoses.
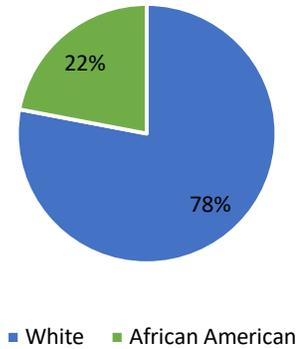
Exhibit 12. Race Distribution

Exhibit 13. Grade Distribution

Grade	Number	Percent
Half Day Kindergarten	1	3%
Full Day Kindergarten	6	19%
First Grade	3	9%
Second Grade	5	16%
Third Grade	1	3%
Fourth Grade	3	9%
Fifth Grade	2	6%
Sixth Grade	2	6%
Seventh Grade	2	6%
Eighth Grade	3	9%
Ninth Grade	0	--
Tenth Grade	0	--
Eleventh Grade	2	6%
Twelfth Grade	2	6%

Exhibit 14. Distribution of Qualifying Disability

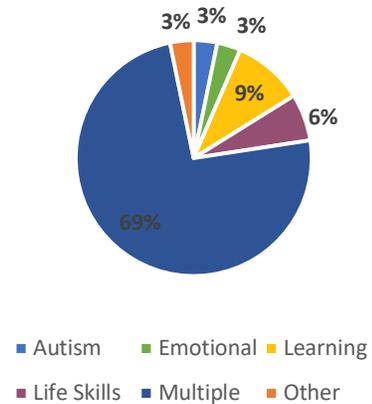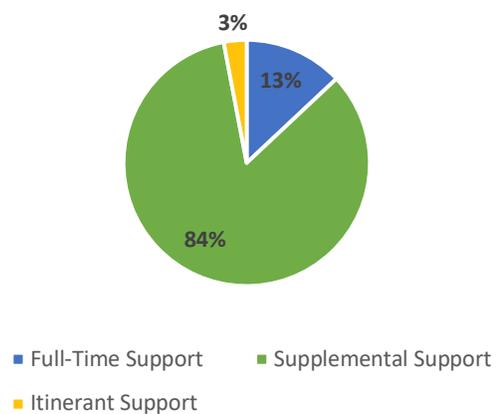| Qualifying Disability	Percent
Autism	38%
Multiple Disabilities	9%
Intellectual Disabilities	22%
Other Health Impairment	16%
Specific Learning Disability	6%
Emotional Disturbance	3%

Exhibit 15. Type of Support Services

Exhibit 16. Amount of Special Education Services

The majority of students participating were in elementary school, with the largest percentage of students attending full day kindergarten. The largest majority of students' qualifying diagnosis to receive services was autism, while nearly all students received multiple types of support. Most support received by students was characterized by supplemental, which equates to roughly 20-80% of special education support during the school day.

Functional Outcomes Classification of Assets for Learners (FOCAL)

The Functional Outcomes Classification of Assets for Learners (FOCAL) is a measure based on the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education (OSEP) framework for mandated documentation and reporting of status and progress data of young children at entry and exit from early intervention programs. Additional items were added to the post-test FOCAL to measure performance and growth in learning; the items rely upon the informed observation and judgment of both parents and teachers. The FOCAL instrument measures expected functional competencies for children/students as a result of improved teaching practices from Pre-K to High School due to individualized IMFS mentoring. The instrument assesses and profiles 6 functional assets of the students:

1. **Social-Emotional:** i.e., the degree to which students shows functional progress in acquiring positive social-emotional and engagement skills;
2. **Knowledge:** i.e., extent to which students show functional progress relating to using knowledge and skills;
3. **Effective Actions:** i.e., the functional progress in taking appropriate action to meet own needs;
4. **Self-Regulation**: i.e., demonstrating skills in self-regulatory behaviors as relating to classroom learning;
5. **Academics:** i.e., the extent to which students demonstrate functional capacity in acquiring and using academic skills;
6. **Technology:** i.e., demonstrating skills in acquiring and applying computer-assisted technology for classroom learning.
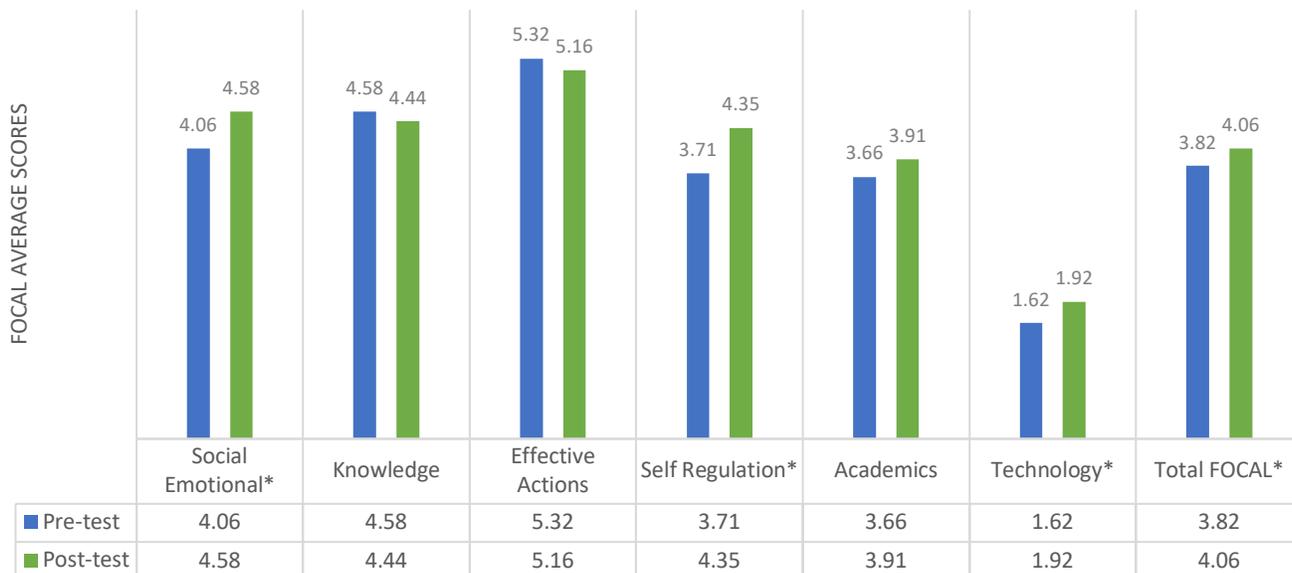
The FOCAL is based on a 7-point Likert-type scale. However, the two scales do differ in the interpretation of the scoring. That is, while the FOCAL Progress items asks about whether the child has or has not made observable progress (according the qualitative judgment of both teacher and parent) the FOCAL scale asks and assesses the extent to which the student demonstrates and performs specifics skills and behaviors. The 7 point Likert-type scale gradients and values for both scales are provided in Exhibit below.

Exhibit 17. FOCAL Gradients and Values

Rating	FOCAL (Age-appropriate skills + functioning)	FOCAL Progress (Acquiring and showing improved performance)	Rating
1	**Not Yet**	**No Observable Progress**	1
2	*(rarely)*	*(very little progress)*	2
3	**Emerging**	**Made Observable Progress**	3
4	*(sometimes but not consistent)*	*(closer to same-age peers)*	4
5	**Somewhat**	**Reached Level of Same-Age Peers**	5
6	*(generally age appropriate)*	*(mostly at or slightly above same-age peers)*	6
7	**Completely**	**Maintained Level of Same-Age Peers**	7

Results of the analysis of the FOCAL changes in student learning and social-behavioral competencies show significant student improvement over the course of the intervention. A total of 39 FOCAL forms were collected at both pre and post-test. Improvement was observed across most FOCAL domains, with the largest gains seen in social-emotional, self-regulation, and technology. Exhibit 18 displays the FOCAL mean scores from pre to post-test.

Exhibit 18. Mean gains on the Functional Outcomes Classification of Assets for Learners

	Social Emotional*	Knowledge	Effective Actions	Self Regulation*	Academics	Technology*	Total FOCAL*
Pre-test	4.06	4.58	5.32	3.71	3.66	1.62	3.82
Post-test	4.58	4.44	5.16	4.35	3.91	1.92	4.06

Examination of the post-test scores indicate that students' functional skills across domains are sometimes, but not consistently evident. Looking across post-test domain scores, students were rated as most consistently being able to take appropriate action to meet their own needs (i.e., demonstrating independence in self-help skills).

Exhibit 19. Extent of Progress Made Across FOCAL Domains
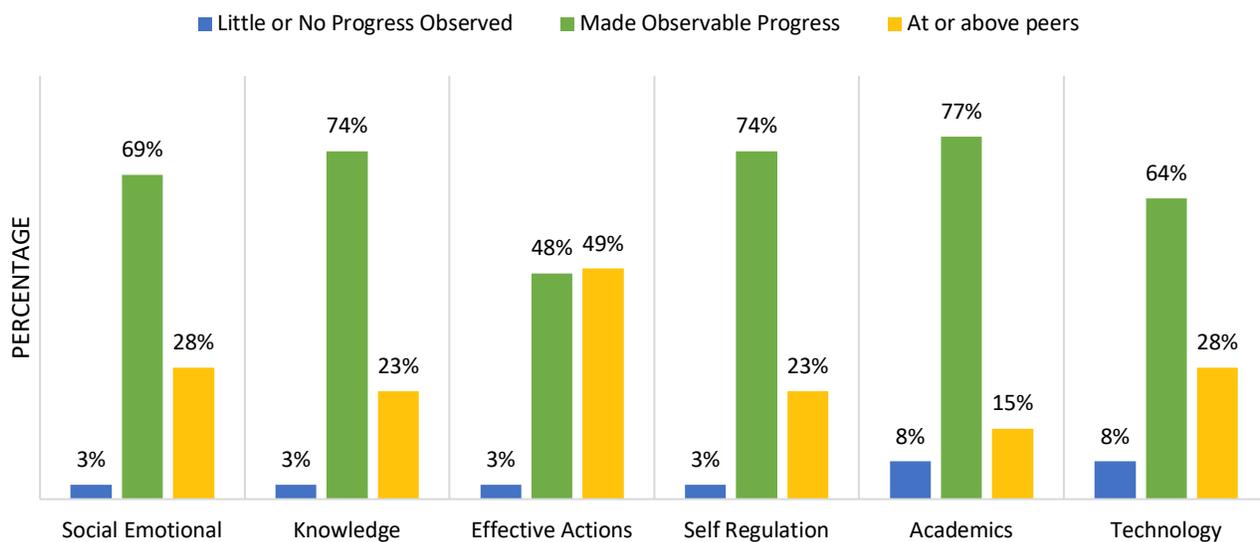
Examination of the FOCAL Progress Scale Scores collected in the Spring reveal that over two-thirds of the students made the most progress in attaining positive social-emotional skills and social engagement, acquiring and using knowledge and skills, self-regulation skills related to classroom learning, and acquiring and using academic skills for classroom learning. The least amount of progress was observed in the Effective Actions Domain, but it is important to note that nearly 50% of students were rated as demonstrating skills commensurate with their peers.

Academic Competence Scale (ACS)

In addition to the FOCAL, the Academic Competence Scale (ACS; of the Social Skills Improvement System; Gresham & Elliot, 2008) was used to assess students' academic performance and progress. The adapted scale included 7 items that assess the level of academic competence for students from Kindergarten through Grade 12 and profiles the students' performance in terms of their percentile rank as compared to same-aged peers. The scale is rated from a score of 1 = lowest 10% performance; 2 = next lowest 20%; 3= middle or 40% rank; 4= next highest 20%; and 5 = highest 10%.

Teachers were asked to compare their students to their peers across the following items:

- Overall academic performance
- Reading
- Math
- Overall motivation
- Intellectual Functioning

Exhibit 20 shows the frequency percentage of students moving from a lower rating category to a higher rating category at post-test (i.e., Lowest 10%, Lowest 20%, Middle 40%, etc.).

Exhibit 20. Students changing ACS Rating Categories
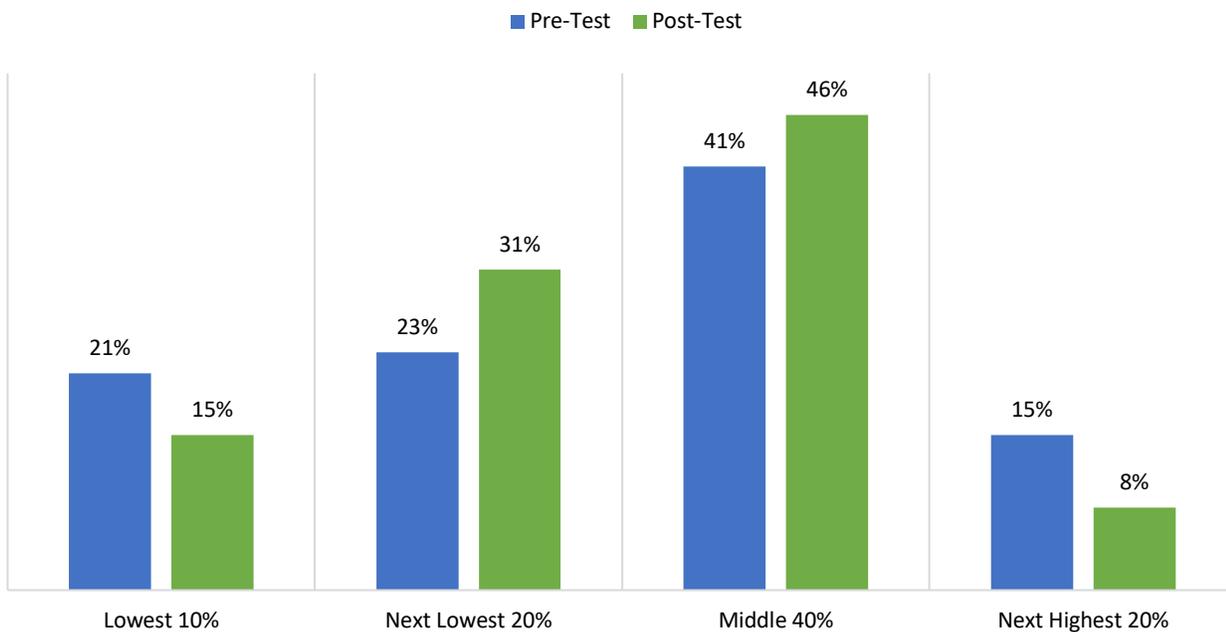
Examination of the graph above shows that at the end of the school year, more students were rated in the middle 40 percent by teachers, compared to their typical peer's overall academic performance. This trend was observed across other academic competencies: reading and intellectual functioning. Across all competencies, the majority of students did not change categorical ratings from pre to post-test, and were rated by their teachers as performing in the middle 40% compared to typical peers.

Teacher Perceptions

Four teachers completed a pre-test survey, and seventeen teachers completed a post-test survey. Of those, only 1 teacher completed both pre-test and post-test surveys in the 2018-2019 school year. Lower scores represent more positive responses and attitudes toward inclusion. Average scores decreased from Fall to Spring, reflecting an increase in positive perceptions around inclusion. The two exhibits below show the average survey scores across the year, and the items with the highest frequency of strong ratings by teachers at post-test: a) most strongly in agreement with the statement, and b) most strongly disagreeing with the statement.

Exhibit 21. Mean scores on the Teacher Perceptions Survey

	Mean
Pre-Test	31.13
Post-Test	27.1

Exhibit 22. Frequency of Strong Ratings on the Teacher Perceptions Survey Post-test

Item	Most Often Rated Positive (Strongly Agree)	Frequency
10	I feel I have a positive attitude toward having children with disabilities in the classroom.	100%
02	If a child were to spend much of his/her day in a regular classroom, he/she would be more likely to build friendships with peers without disabilities in that room.	94%
09	I feel that I communicate effectively with parents.	94%
	Most Often Rated Negative (Strongly Disagree)	
6	Most school staff understand the capabilities of children with disabilities.	12%

Parent Perceptions

Three parents completed a pre-test survey, and 8 parents completed a post-test survey. Of those, none of the parents completed both pre-test and post-test surveys in the 2018-2019 school year. Lower scores represent more positive responses and attitudes toward inclusion. Average scores decreased from Fall to Spring, reflecting an increase in positive perceptions around inclusion. The two exhibits below show the average survey scores across the year, and the items with the highest frequency of strong ratings by teachers at post-test: a) most strongly in agreement with the statement, and b) most strongly disagreeing with the statement.

Exhibit 23. Mean scores on the Parent Perceptions Survey

	Mean
Pre-Test	32.3
Post-Test	26.6

Exhibit 24. Frequency of Strong Ratings on the Parent Perceptions Survey Post-test

Item	Most Often Rated Positive (Strongly Agree)	Frequency
08	Teachers respect my opinions and regard me as the expert when it comes to my child.	88%
11	My child fully participates in classroom activities.	88%
	Most Often Rated Negative (Strongly Disagree)	
6	Most school staff understand my child's abilities.	25%

Survey results indicate that teachers strongly agreed that they have a positive attitude toward children with disabilities and that they effectively communicate with parents while parents strongly agreed that teachers respected their opinions about their children. Parents strongly disagreed that school staff understand their children's abilities while teachers strongly disagreed that school staff understand the capabilities of children with disabilities. **Both teachers and parents showed improved attitudes about inclusion from pre to post-test.**

Social Validity

We administered the *Include Me* Partner's Survey to evaluate stakeholder's perceptions of the potential "spread of effect" or extended influence/impact of IM in the entire school or perhaps community. Specifically, we wanted to explore the perceived benefits from the IM consultants supporting and mentoring teachers, students, and parents. The survey contained 12 questions, where partners selected answers on a scale from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree". Concluding the survey, we asked partners to identify both positive and negative critical incidents they observed during the year.

Fifty-five partners across five school districts received the survey, of which we received a 24% response rate, representing all of the school districts. Survey results were collected in the summer of 2019.

The following exhibit compares average score on the survey by teachers, parents, and district administrators. Lower averages indicate more positive responses, such as "Strongly Agree" or "Agree." As displayed on the graph, teachers felt most strongly about the perceived benefits of IM, compared to teachers and district administrators.

Exhibit 25. Average Survey Scores per Partner Type
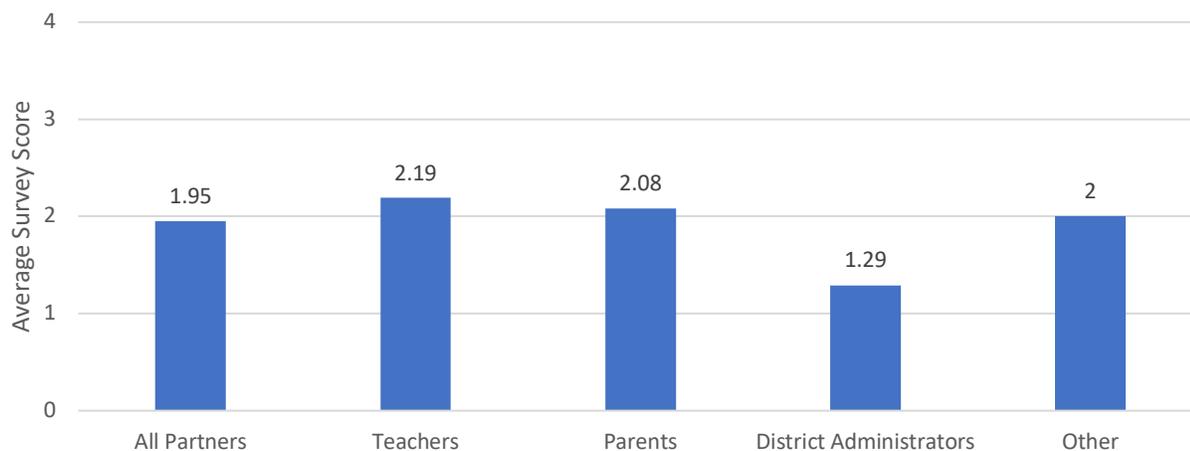
The following exhibit illustrates strong ratings from partners' survey responses, both positive and negative.

Exhibit 26. Frequency of Strong Ratings on the Include Me Partner's Survey

Item	Most Often Rated Positive (Strongly Agree or Agree)	Frequency
03	Inclusion is accepted as a best practice in our district.	91%
Item	**Most Often Rated Negatively (Disagree or Strongly Disagree)**	**Frequency**
12	*Include Me*-mentored schools have been creative in developing new partnerships with community-based non-profits and agencies to support students with disabilities and their parents.	50%

Notable responses were also found in the critical incident portion of the survey. Some positive events or changes observed and noted on the surveys included: increased use of student-first language; welcoming attitude toward all students; creation of **meaningful** IEP goals, planning documents, and progress reports; strengthened parent partnerships; and improved peer relationships. Negative events or instances observed and noted on partner surveys included: lack of impact beyond the immediate teaching team; lack of opportunity for professional development around inclusion for all district staff.

Exploratory analyses suggest that teacher inclusion practices are related to students' post-test FOCAL scores. **That is, teachers whose inclusion practices were rated high at post-test by consultants were more likely to have students who demonstrated higher functional skills at post-test.**

Exhibit 27 displays student progress by teachers' inclusion practices. Educationally significant differences were found at post-test between the two inclusion groups across all FOCAL domains. That is, there is a continuing trend showing that students of teachers who were rated as usually demonstrating effective inclusion practices had higher FOCAL scores at post-test, compared to students of teachers who were rated as partially demonstrating effective inclusion practices.

Exhibit 27. Post-test FOCAL scores by Inclusion Practices

Chart: POST-TEST FOCAL SCORES

Domain	High Inclusion	Low Inclusion
Social Emotional	4.69	4.37
Knowledge	4.61	4.05
Effective Actions	5.08	4.8
Self Regulaton	4.48	4.04
Academics	3.88	3.42