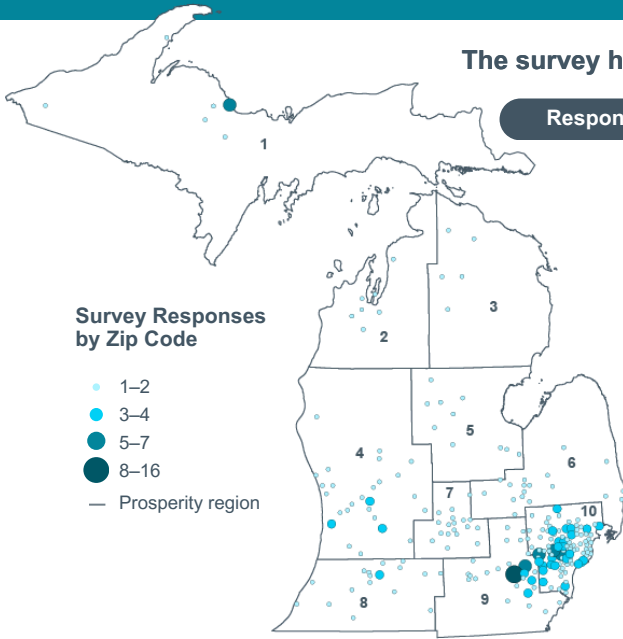
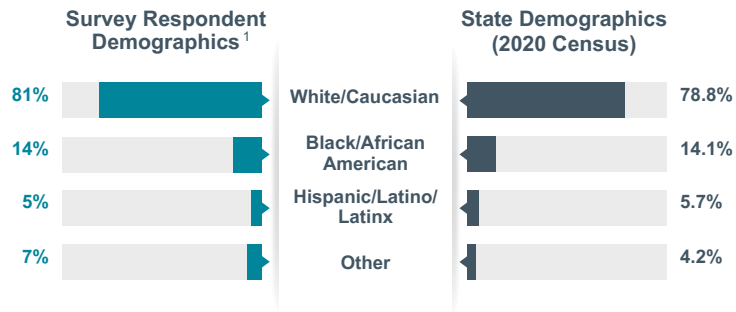


The Autism Alliance of Michigan (AAoM) was founded on the vision that people with autism will lead lives that meet their greatest potential. In 2023, AAoM fielded an unprecedented online survey to inform collective advocacy efforts to improve access and grow opportunities for students with disabilities across the state.

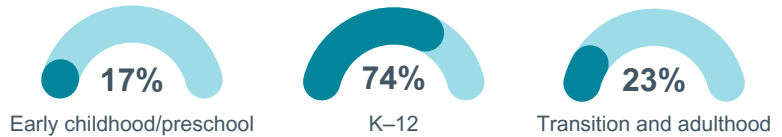
The survey had **890 responses** from across Michigan.



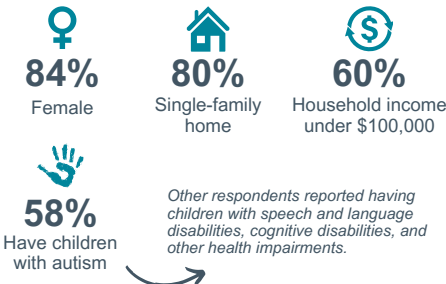
Respondents mirror Michigan's racial demographics:



Respondents included individuals with disabilities and parents of students with disabilities from various educational levels:



Respondent characteristics:



What Is Special Education?

The system we refer to as "special education" is governed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), enacted in 1975 and last reauthorized by Congress in 2004. Under IDEA, schools are obligated to provide a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment to eligible students through an individualized family service plan (IFSP) or individualized education program (IEP). IEPs and IFSPs are legal documents outlining the services and supports a student needs. With tools like these, IDEA helps prepare eligible children with disabilities for further education, employment, and independent living.

Secondary Transition

Planning post-high school goals includes students developing their objectives for adult life and may begin at any point in the student's educational experience. This planning often begins with the completion of an educational development plan (EDP). All Michigan students are required to complete an EDP in seventh grade to begin to identify education and career goals aligned with their interests and abilities.

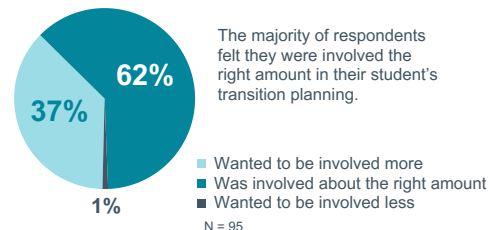
Parallel to the EDP, transition planning is an additional process outlined by IDEA intended to assist students with an IEP with the progression from school activities to post-high school activities, including postsecondary education and/or employment. Transition also incorporates the provision of services and supports to assist the student in accomplishing their goals.

IDEA requires that transition planning begin no later than the effective date of the first IEP after the student turns 16. Alternately, it can begin at a younger age if determined appropriate by the IEP team, which includes the respective student and parents.

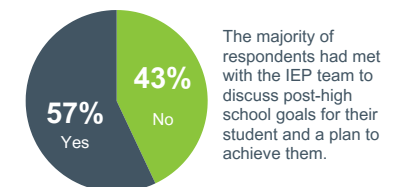
Parent Involvement

A transition plan is based on a student's strengths, preferences, and interests, which may change year to year. In preparation for adult life, the plan also identifies opportunities for the student to gain the skills and knowledge needed for continuing education, work, and community participation.

How Do Parents Feel About Their Involvement in Their Student's Transition Plan?



Has the Family Discussed Post-high-school Plans with the IEP Team?



¹ Survey demographic questions were optional.

² Office of Special Education, Michigan Department of Education, February 2022. *Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities*. Accessed January 30, 2024.

Secondary Transition

Student Involvement

Many respondents said their students actively participated in their own transition planning. They said:



52%

Participated in assessments related to career interests



43%

Provided input into the plan



42%

Participated in assessments related to further training or education

N = 204



Transition planning was minimal and then COVID led to two years of lost time when we were supposed to be experiencing vocational options and community participation. We are about to fall off the cliff into the abyss of no openings in adult programs.”

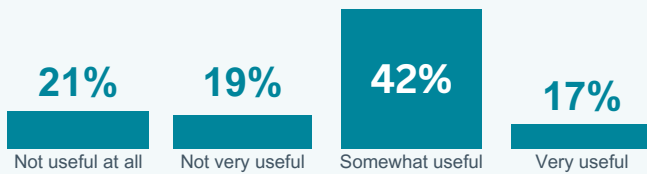
—Michigan parent

Quality and Utility of Transition Planning

Secondary transition planning is intended to consider the student's interests and strengths and build a bridge from high school to adult life.

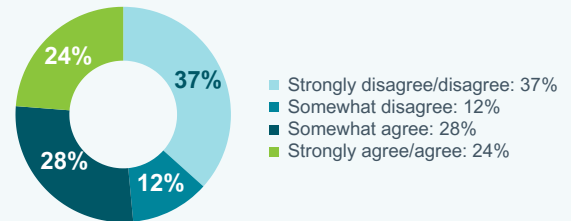
A high-quality secondary transition plan includes appropriate, measurable postsecondary goals and sufficient transition services to meet those goals.

How Useful Has Transition Planning Been in Helping Your Student Prepare for Life After High School?



Most respondents (59%) found transition planning either very or somewhat useful to preparing their student for life after high school (N = 98).

My Student Has a High-quality Transition Plan



Only 24% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their student has a high-quality transition plan that will support a successful transition from high school to adult life (N = 102).

My Student's Transition Goals Are Appropriate

Only 35% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their student's transition goals are appropriate considering their student's skills, interests, and preferences.



Transition planning has been sadly lacking, especially related to options and choices for the students.” —Michigan parent

To learn more about Autism Alliance of Michigan or to get involved, go to: autismallianceofmichigan.org/education-initiatives/ or

SCAN THIS CODE FOR MORE INFO



He is now 25 and will age out of all programs soon. After he leaves [the transition program], there is not much out there for him. He won't ever be able to work without constant assistance. I worry that once he is done with school, he will just be at home all day with no purpose to his life.” —Michigan parent

