

SPIRITED ATHLETES

SABAH

BOLD AT HEART

School Day Adaptive Ice Skating Program



School Day Program

The School Day Adaptive Ice Skating (SDAIS) Program

2025-2026 Evaluation Report

“SABAH is where our classroom's hard work meets pure joy. It provides my students with a unique, adaptive outlet to learn, move, and grow outside the four walls of our classroom.”

Teacher, SDAIS

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Evaluation Report

A word cloud of teal text on a light blue background. The words are arranged in a circular pattern. The most prominent words are 'students' and 'Learning'. Other words include 'physical ice confidence build', 'SABAH program', 'makes work academic', 'helps skills new Learning routine', 'engagement concepts classroom', and 'Students gained started increase'.

“It allows our students to see themselves as role models and heroes and risk takers. What is more important than that?” Teacher, SDAIS

Background Information

SABAH's School Day Adaptive Ice Skating (SDAIS) program remains one of the most distinctive adaptive education and recreation experiences available to students in Western New York. The program is intentionally designed for youth with physical, developmental, behavioral, sensory, and/or emotional challenges, many of whom benefit from specialized instructional settings and related therapeutic supports. Through adaptive equipment, structured routines, individualized coaching, and a welcoming ice environment, SDAIS helps students build confidence, mobility, social connection, and readiness to learn.

The program's design aligns with the educational and developmental needs of students with disabilities by integrating movement, repetition, sensory regulation, and clear directions into a meaningful real-world activity. For many students, skating becomes more than recreation. It becomes a vehicle for practicing balance, coordination, endurance, sequencing, communication, peer interaction, perseverance, and self-regulation. Teachers repeatedly described SDAIS as a setting in which students can demonstrate strengths that are not always visible in a traditional classroom environment.

SDAIS also reinforces the broader principle that physical movement and academic learning can work together rather than in isolation. When students engage in counting, letter identification, sequencing, turn-taking, and listening while moving, many experience stronger attention, motivation, and retention. This whole-child approach is especially important for students who respond best to kinesthetic learning, structured novelty, and positive, success-oriented challenge.

The 2025-2026 data continue to show that SDAIS is producing meaningful impact across physical, academic, social/emotional, and classroom behavior domains. Just as importantly, the qualitative feedback underscores that the program creates joy, belonging, and authentic opportunity. For many participants, SABAH is not simply an enrichment experience; it is one of the most affirming and memorable parts of the school year.

Methodology

This report is based on SABAH's 2025-2026 School Day Program teacher survey. Twenty-one (21) educators responded to the core outcome questions, while twenty (20) completed the program profile items related to district/institution, classroom type, and number of participating students. The survey gathered both quantitative ratings and qualitative feedback, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of program impact from the perspective of participating educators.

The survey examined six major areas: overall academic growth through movement-based learning, physical development, academic development, social/emotional development, classroom behavior and self-regulation, and overall program value. Open-ended questions invited educators to describe specific examples of student growth, elaborate on observed changes, and explain what SABAH means to them and their students.

Because several item-level questions were completed by slightly different numbers of respondents, this report presents findings using the response base shown for each question when appropriate. As a result, percentages may vary modestly across domains. This approach reflects the structure of the source data and provides the most accurate interpretation of educator feedback.

Respondent and Program Profile

The 2025-2026 survey reflects a broad cross-section of Western New York districts and specialized educational settings participating in SDAIS. Among respondents who identified their district or institution, the largest representation came from Eden Central School District (4 responses), followed by Frontier Central School District, Buffalo Public Schools, and Lake Shore Central School District (3 each). Additional responses came from Sweet Home Central School District and Grand Island Central School District (2 each), as well as Beyond Learning Center, Lackawanna Central School District, and Niagara Falls City School District. A write-in response also identified McKinley.

Classroom settings were similarly diverse. The most common classroom types were 8-1-1 and 12-1-1 (25% each), followed by 6-1-1 (15%). Additional respondents reported 12-1-2 and 15-1 settings, while several wrote in other specialized formats, including 8:1:2, 8:1:3, 6:1:3, and occupational therapy-based participation. This spread suggests that SABAH continues to engage students across multiple instructional models and levels of need.

Educators reported a combined total of 156 participating students represented within the surveyed classrooms and programs. While this figure reflects the survey sample rather than the full program census, it nevertheless demonstrates substantial reach. It also underscores that the outcomes described in this report are grounded in educator observations across a meaningful number of students, schools, and classroom contexts.

Executive Summary

The 2025-2026 evaluation of SABAH's School Day Adaptive Ice Skating (SDAIS) program demonstrates that the program continues to produce strong, multidimensional benefits for participating students. The most consistent strengths in this year's data appear in the physical, social/emotional, and classroom behavior domains, where educator agreement was overwhelmingly positive and, in many cases, unanimous. Teachers described students gaining strength, stamina, confidence, patience, peer connection, and the willingness to attempt difficult tasks that once felt out of reach.



Physical development remained a standout area. All respondents to the physical domain items agreed that students benefited in gross motor skills, stamina, and physical goal attainment. Social/emotional outcomes were equally compelling. Across empathy, motivation, peer-to-peer interaction, and student-to-teacher interaction, every respondent selected either Strongly Agree or Agree. Classroom behavior indicators were also uniformly positive, with all respondents affirming gains in positive decision-making, transitions, attentiveness, and classroom participation.

Academic findings were also strong, though slightly more varied than the other domains. Approximately nine in ten respondents

agreed that students experience academic growth because of the connection between movement and educational concepts in SABAH. On the specific academic development items, favorable ratings remained high: 15 of 16 respondents reported benefits in ELA achievement, 14 of 15 in math achievement, and 16 of 17 in academic goal attainment. Qualitative comments suggest that these gains are driven not only by embedded literacy and numeracy practice, but also by improved focus, confidence, stamina, and readiness to engage.

Just as importantly, teachers overwhelmingly affirmed the program's overall value. Most respondents reported that students display positive behaviors both on SABAH days and during the week that follows, and 20 of 21 educators said the benefits of the program outweigh the time and effort required to participate. Taken together, the 2025-2026 findings indicate that SDAIS remains a highly effective, highly valued program that supports whole-child development in ways that are both measurable and deeply meaningful.

Student Impact Domain: Physical, Social/Emotional, Control, and Academic

The 2025-2026 evaluation examined the four core student impact categories used in the prior evaluation model: Physical, Social/Emotional, Control, and Academic. Across these domains, the data continue to show a program that is highly effective and broadly affirming for students with diverse needs. While the academic items showed slightly more variation than the other categories, the overall pattern remains clear: SDAIS creates a structured environment in which movement, challenge, encouragement, and skill practice reinforce one another.

Physical Development

The strongest and most uniform outcomes again emerged in physical development. Teachers reported gains in gross motor skills, stamina, balance, coordination, body awareness, and physical goal attainment. Educators repeatedly described students progressing from walkers or constant support to periods of independent skating, and they connected these changes to improved strength, endurance, and willingness to persist through challenge. The physical domain remains one of SABAH's signature strengths.

Social/Emotional Development

SDAIS also continues to promote powerful social and emotional growth. Teachers emphasized empathy, motivation, encouragement of peers, pride, joy, and the development of friendships within and across schools. The program's supportive culture appears to help students take emotional risks safely, celebrate one another's progress, and participate in ways that build both belonging and self-belief.

Self-Regulation and Control

The control domain, reflected in classroom behavior indicators, remained exceptionally strong. Teachers observed

improvement in positive decision-making, transitions, attentiveness, and participation. These outcomes suggest that SDAIS does more than create isolated moments of success on the ice; it helps students practice routines, listening, patience, and behavioral regulation that transfer back into the school day.

Academic Development

Academic outcomes remained highly positive and continue to validate SABAH's movement-integrated model. Teachers reported growth in letter and number recognition, counting, sequencing, sight word use, writing stamina, and overall attention to instructional tasks. Several educators made the important point that academic growth in SABAH is not limited to drills themselves; it is also fueled by improved confidence, motivation, and readiness to learn.

A Comprehensive, Synergistic Impact

When the 2025-2026 data are considered as a whole, SABAH again emerges as a synergistic program in which physical, emotional, behavioral, social, and academic gains reinforce one another. Students become stronger and more confident; confidence supports engagement; engagement improves classroom behavior; and stronger attention and persistence support academic growth. This integrated pattern is one of the defining characteristics of the SDAIS program and one of the clearest reasons it continues to be so highly valued by educators.



Detailed Summary of Student Impact Domain: Physical, Social/Emotional, Control, and Academic Categories

According to participating educators, SABAH's School Day Adaptive Ice Skating (SDAIS) program continued to generate strong outcomes across all major domains during 2025-2026. The quantitative data are reinforced by rich qualitative observations describing increased independence, stronger peer relationships, improved attention, and renewed excitement for learning. The following sections summarize the major findings in each category.

Physical

Physical development remained the clearest area of consensus in the 2025-2026 data. Every respondent to the physical domain items reported positive student benefits. Although the concentration of Strongly Agree responses was modestly lower than in the prior year's report, the overall message remains unequivocal: teachers continue to view SABAH as highly effective in supporting physical growth.

- **Gross Motor Skills** (17 of 21 Strongly Agreed; 4 of 21 Agreed; 100% favorable)
- **Stamina** (18 of 21 Strongly Agreed; 3 of 21 Agreed; 100% favorable)
- **Physical Goal Attainment** (17 of 21 Strongly Agreed; 4 of 21 Agreed; 100% favorable)
- **Qualitative:** Teachers described students moving from walkers or heavy support toward partial or independent skating, as well as improved balance, coordination, and endurance.

Teacher comments add important context to these findings. Educators reported seeing better posture, increased sitting tolerance, stronger core control, improved crossing-midline, enhanced sensory integration, and greater willingness to exert sustained effort. For students who often avoid physical education or tire quickly, SABAH appears to offer a uniquely motivating context for physical challenge and success.

Social/Emotional

Social/emotional development also remained exceptionally strong. Across all reported social/emotional measures, every respondent selected either Strongly Agree or Agree. In a year when students continue to benefit from authentic opportunities for connection, encouragement, and regulated risk-taking, these findings are especially meaningful.

- **Empathy** (14 of 18 Strongly Agreed; 4 of 18 Agreed; 100% favorable)
- **Motivation** (16 of 20 Strongly Agreed; 4 of 20 Agreed; 100% favorable)
- **Peer-to-Peer Social Interaction** (17 of 21 Strongly Agreed; 4 of 21 Agreed; 100% favorable)
- **Student-to-Teacher Interaction** (15 of 20 Strongly Agreed; 5 of 20 Agreed; 100% favorable)
- **Qualitative:** Teachers frequently described students cheering for one another, helping peers after falls, interacting appropriately with students from other schools, and showing visible pride and excitement.

Compared with the previous evaluation model, the 2025-2026 data suggest continued strength and, in some areas, even deeper emphasis on empathy, encouragement, and peer connection. Teachers consistently framed SABAH as a place where students who may struggle socially in other settings can build friendships, assume leadership, and experience belonging.

Control

The classroom behavior and self-regulation domain remained uniformly positive. Every educator who answered these questions agreed that students benefit from SABAH with regard to positive decision-making, transitions, attentiveness, and classroom participation. These findings suggest that the program's structured routines, clear expectations, and motivating environment continue to support transfer of learning beyond the rink.

- **Positive Decision Making** (11 of 21 Strongly Agreed; 10 of 21 Agreed; 100% favorable)
- **Transitions from One Activity to Another** (12 of 21 Strongly Agreed; 9 of 21 Agreed; 100% favorable)
- **Attentiveness** (12 of 21 Strongly Agreed; 9 of 21 Agreed; 100% favorable)
- **Classroom Participation** (12 of 21 Strongly Agreed; 9 of 21 Agreed; 100% favorable)
- **Qualitative:** Teachers linked these gains to routine, anticipation, listening for safety, increased compliance, and a stronger ability to remain engaged during classroom instruction.

In qualitative responses, teachers noted that SABAH helps students practice waiting, listening, adapting to transitions, and participating with purpose. Several also described improved bus transitions, better compliance with classroom expectations, and stronger carryover of positive reinforcement into the rest of the school week.

Academic

Academic development remained strong in 2025-2026, though it was the one domain that showed slightly more variability than the physical, social/emotional, and control categories. Even so, the results remain highly favorable and continue to support the underlying logic of SABAH's movement-based learning model.

- **Overall Academic Growth Through Movement** (approximately 19 of 21 favorable responses; roughly 90% positive)
- **ELA Academic Achievement** (15 of 16 favorable responses; 93.8% positive)
- **Math Academic Achievement** (14 of 15 favorable responses; 93.3% positive)
- **Academic Goal Attainment** (16 of 17 favorable responses; 94.1% positive)
- **Qualitative:** Teachers described growth in number recognition, letter identification, counting, sequencing, sight word use, sentence construction, writing stamina, and attention to task.

The qualitative data are especially helpful in understanding the academic story. Teachers emphasized that movement helps make abstract concepts concrete, captures attention for students who struggle with seat work, and motivates participation. They also stressed that academic gains are amplified by stronger stamina, focus, self-confidence, and willingness to attempt challenging tasks. In other words, SABAH appears to support academic development both directly and indirectly.

Overall Impact of SABAH from the Teachers Perspective

A particularly important test of program value is whether its effects extend beyond the rink itself. The 2025-2026 data suggest that they do. Teachers overwhelmingly reported positive behavior on SABAH days, continued positive behavior during the week that follows, and a very strong belief that the benefits of the program outweigh the time and effort needed to participate.

- My students display positive behaviors on the day of our SABAH session (20 of 21 favorable responses; 95.2% positive)
- My students display positive behaviors during the week following our SABAH session (18 of 19 favorable responses; 94.7% positive)
- The benefits my students get from participating in SABAH outweigh the time and effort required to take part in the program (20 of 21 favorable responses; 95.2% positive)



These findings reinforce the central conclusion of this evaluation: SABAH is not simply enjoyable, and it is not merely beneficial in isolated ways. Rather, it creates a sustained positive effect on students' physical functioning, mood, readiness to learn, and school participation. Even where a small number of responses were more cautious, the overall pattern remains overwhelmingly favorable and strongly supportive of the program's value.

The Teachers' Perspective: A Qualitative Analysis

The open-ended responses in the 2025-2026 data report provide a vivid picture of how teachers experience SABAH alongside their students. These comments consistently describe a program that fosters courage, joy, movement, inclusion, and growth. Although the quantitative findings are compelling on their own, the qualitative evidence helps explain why educators feel so strongly about the program and why they so often describe it as one of the highlights of the school year.

Student Growth (Holistic Development)

- Teachers repeatedly described SABAH as a setting where students become more willing to try difficult tasks and more confident in their ability to succeed.
- Growth was not limited to one domain; educators linked skating progress to classroom confidence, compliance, participation, and willingness to extend learning.
- Several comments highlighted the importance of authentic success. Students who began the year anxious, hesitant, or unsure often ended it proud, eager, and more independent.
- The program appears to help students see themselves differently, not only as learners with needs, but as capable individuals who can progress, contribute, and shine.

Physical Development

- Teachers observed increases in balance, coordination, posture, strength, stamina, endurance, and body awareness.
- Multiple respondents described students moving from walkers or seated supports to freer, more independent skating.
- Physical growth was often framed as both therapeutic and motivational: students were working hard, but they were also having fun and wanting to stay on the ice longer.
- For some students who are reluctant to engage in other physical activity settings, SABAH created a rare and meaningful context for sustained movement.

Social and Emotional Development

- Teachers described SABAH as a place where students cheer for peers, help one another after falls, and interact positively with new classmates and adults.
- The program's mixed-school and team-oriented environment appears to strengthen inclusion, empathy, and communication.
- Motivation emerged as a major theme. Students looked forward to SABAH, talked about it all week, and took pride in participating and improving.
- Several responses suggested that emotional growth is closely tied to success on the ice; as students become more confident physically, they also become more open socially and emotionally.

Self-Regulation and Classroom Readiness

- Teachers linked SABAH to better listening, improved transitions, stronger attention, greater compliance, and more positive classroom behavior.
- The routines associated with transportation, preparation, dressing, skating, and safety appear to reinforce structure and self-management.
- Students were described as more motivated to complete work, more willing to follow directions, and better able to sustain participation after engaging in movement-based activity.
- These patterns suggest that SABAH contributes to school readiness in practical, observable ways.

Academic Development

- Teachers reported improvements in foundational literacy and numeracy, especially letter identification, number recognition, counting, sequencing, and sight word use.
- Movement-based instruction was seen as especially valuable for students who struggle with traditional desk-based tasks.
- Educators also emphasized indirect academic benefits, including stronger focus, increased writing stamina, better retention, and deeper engagement.
- Academic growth was therefore understood not only as curriculum exposure, but as the result of a more engaged, confident, and regulated learner.

Meaning, Joy, and Belonging

- Across comments, SABAH was described as joy, opportunity, inclusion, and even the best part of the week.
- Teachers valued the way the program allows students to participate in an activity they might not otherwise access.
- Several comments stressed that students gain a sense of pride, visibility, and identity through SABAH, especially during demonstrations and performance opportunities.

- This emotional meaning is central to the program's impact. SABAH is remembered not just because students skate, but because they experience success, support, and belonging while doing so.

Taken together, the qualitative evidence portrays SABAH as a high-impact, whole-child program whose benefits extend far beyond the technical act of learning to skate. The comments suggest that what makes SABAH especially powerful is its combination of challenge, support, structure, movement, and joy. That combination enables students to build skills while also building identity, confidence, and connection.



Teacher Comments

Student Growth

- “Learning how to skate was a new skill for most of my students this year. Being successful on the ice has boosted their confidence off the ice and in the classroom as well.”
- “I had students who started with just reading sight words and started using them in sentences. They were excited to expand and create sentences rather than complaining about having to do work.”
- “Students all start off a little nervous but learn that if they put the effort in they are able to do amazing things.”

Physical

- “Students are definitely getting stronger as the weeks go by. I see it with their ability to sit up at their desks, and focus.”
- “Many students who have started using the walker are now skating without any assistance. This has been amazing to see.”
- “Several students have demonstrated the ability to independently move their walkers or go walker free.”

Social/Emotional

- “It has been amazing to see the students cheer each other on. If someone falls, they are always willing to help each other.”

- “My students struggle with interactions and have limited social skills. They have gotten to experience students from outside of our classroom and have positive interactions with them.”
- “The SABAH program has successfully cultivated intrinsic motivation while strengthening the social fabric of our classroom community.”

Control

- “My students seem to have more motivation and time on task. I think their muscles that they have not used over the weekend being ignited on a Monday morning is especially great for them and gets them in gear for the week.”
- “Students attentiveness to directions have increased.”
- “With learning to skate, you have to listen to staff and teachers in order to stay safe on the ice.”

Academic

- “My students experience significant academic growth in letter and number identification due to the meaningful connection between these foundational concepts and physical movement provided by the SABAH program.”
- “The benefits of reflex integration, building strength, posture, and stamina have started directly impacting our students' school success in so many positive ways.”
- “With counting the steps and participating in the flash card activities on the ice, it allows my students extra time to practice their academic skills while on the ice, making it a fun experience for them.”

Teachers’ Response to “What does SABAH mean to you and your students?”

- “SABAH means the world to me and my students because I see them light up when they learn how to skate and find success.”
- “SABAH means opportunity, inclusion, and meaningful growth for my students.”
- “It literally means everything... it allows our students to see themselves as role models and heroes and risk takers.”
- “Opportunity to belong!”
- “SABAH is where our classroom's hard work meets pure joy.”

Recommendations

Based on the 2025-2026 quantitative and qualitative findings, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen the School Day Adaptive Ice Skating (SDAIS) program and support its long-term sustainability:

Sustain and Expand Access

The findings continue to support broad program value across districts and classroom types. SABAH should continue expanding access where feasible, especially for districts and specialized programs with limited adaptive recreation options.

Preserve the Whole-Child Model

One of the program's greatest strengths is its integration of physical activity, social growth, behavior support, and academic reinforcement. Future program planning should preserve this multidimensional design rather than narrowing the experience to any single outcome area.

Strengthen Academic Documentation

Academic outcomes remain strong, but they also showed the greatest variability this year. SABAH may benefit from

modestly strengthening its documentation of embedded literacy, numeracy, sequencing, and attention-related activities so that the academic logic model is even more explicit to educators and funders.

Continue Emphasizing Social Connection and Belonging

Teachers clearly value SABAH as a place where students build friendships, empathy, and confidence. Program staff should continue fostering these elements intentionally through peer encouragement, celebration of progress, and inclusive routines.

Enhance Longitudinal Measurement

The program would benefit from continued year-over-year tracking of the same outcome domains so trends can be interpreted more precisely over time. Where possible, SABAH may also consider simple pre/post indicators or case studies for selected students.

Use Teacher Voice in Communications and Fundraising

The teacher comments in this year's data are exceptionally compelling. Selected quotes and themes should be incorporated into external communications, grant proposals, annual reports, and donor engagement materials to illustrate the program's human impact.

Maintain Strong Volunteer and Staff Support

Many of the strongest outcomes in the report depend on the safe, encouraging, highly supportive environment created by SABAH staff and volunteers. Continued investment in volunteer recruitment, training, and recognition will help preserve the quality of the student experience.

Prioritize Sustainable Funding

Given the breadth of impact documented in this report, securing reliable multi-year support remains a sound strategic priority. The data show that SDAIS is not only well-loved; it is producing measurable developmental and educational value that merits continued investment.

Summary

The 2025-2026 evaluation of SABAH's School Day Adaptive Ice Skating (SDAIS) program shows a program that remains exceptionally strong, highly valued, and deeply meaningful to participating educators and students. The quantitative results demonstrate broad and consistent gains across physical development, social/emotional growth, classroom behavior, and academic development. The strongest consensus continues to appear in the physical, social/emotional, and control domains, while academic outcomes remain highly favorable and reinforced by extensive teacher testimony.

The qualitative responses make clear that the program's impact cannot be reduced to numbers alone. Teachers described students becoming more confident, more engaged, more willing to take risks, more connected to peers, and more ready to participate in learning. They described joy, pride, inclusion, and belonging. They described students who begin the season unsure of themselves and end it stronger, more independent, and more visible as capable learners and contributors.

Importantly, the 2025-2026 data also confirm that SABAH's benefits extend beyond the ice. Teachers reported positive behavior on program days and sustained effects into the school week. They overwhelmingly affirmed that the benefits



justify the effort of participation. This pattern suggests that SABAH is not simply an enjoyable enrichment activity; it is a structured developmental intervention that supports school success and whole-child growth.

As one educator wrote, 'SABAH means opportunity, inclusion, and meaningful growth for my students.' That statement captures the essence of this year's evaluation. SDAIS continues to provide students with an opportunity they might not otherwise have, while also generating outcomes that matter deeply to schools, families, and the students themselves. It remains a powerful model of adaptive, movement-based learning and a program worthy of continued support and expansion.



Thank you!

This evaluation report is an independent analysis by Dr. Steven J. Harvey and Guided Decisions (A subsidiary of The Center for Education and Career Advancement, Inc.), www.guideddecisions.com, March 2026.