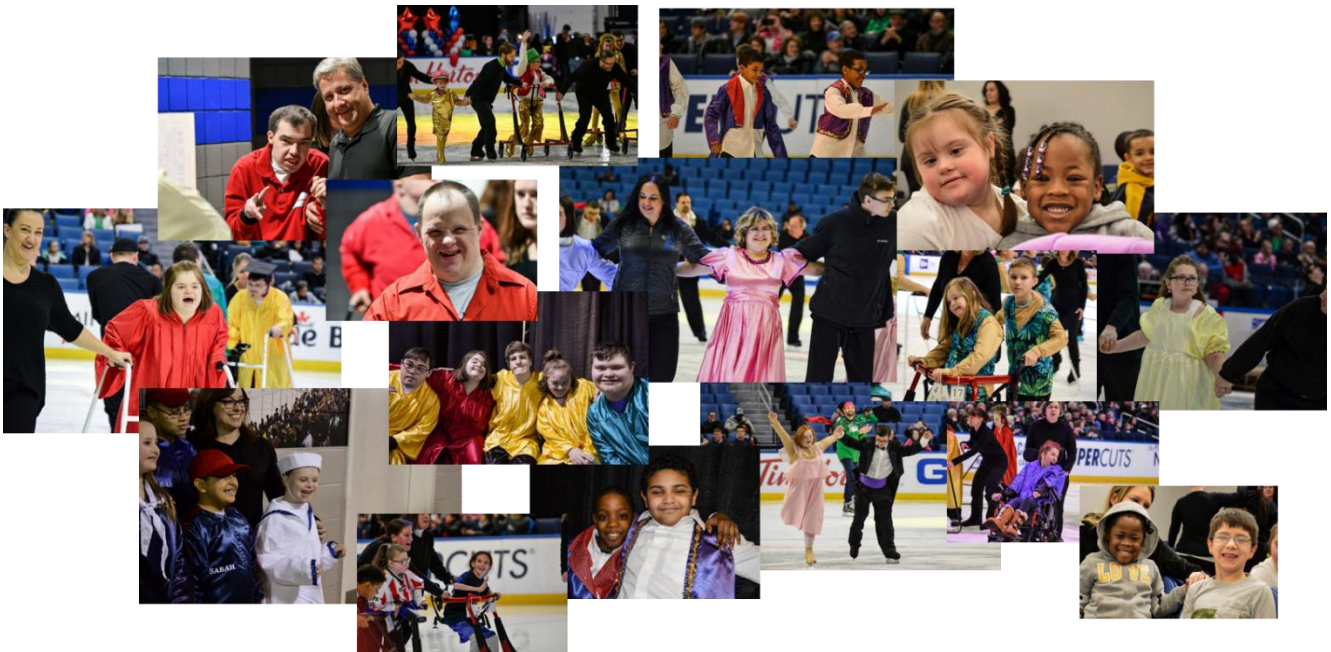


SPIRITED ATHLETES

SABAH

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School Day Adaptive Ice Skating Program



School Day Program

The School Day Adaptive Ice Skating (SDAIS) Program

2024 Evaluation Report

“My students love SABAH and felt extremely special during the experience.

Independent Report Authored by:

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School Day Adaptive Ice Skating (SDAIS) Program 2024

Evaluation Report

“It was a fun way for them to engage in academic activities. They were more eager to participate because they were on the ice versus sitting at a desk in a classroom. They were much more motivated to engage in the activity.”

Teacher, SDAIS

Background Information

The School Day Adaptive Ice Skating (SDAIS) Program is the only program of its type in the United States where students’ individual developmental goals are achieved using adaptive equipment and specialized instructional strategies.

The SDAIS program incorporates “stations” into the curriculum to engage students in a variety of activities. Each class is required to set individual student goals, including dressing skills, skating skills, social skills, following directions, and appropriate interaction with peers, volunteers, and instructors. The lesson plans also incorporate a physical and occupational therapy component. Cutting across these activities are intended outcomes on personal growth (confidence & social), physical well-being, controlling one’s actions, engaging in activities using socially appropriate behavior, and building academic skills.



The program is aligned with the New York State Standards for Individuals with Disabilities, and learning objectives are linked with New York State Educational Standards & Alternative Assessments for Students with Severe Disabilities. The program is connected to the classroom and supports the work of teachers who see SABAH’s SDAIS program as an invaluable motivator for students and a strong reinforcement for the IEP and academic goals of their students.

Methodology

There was a total of 317 youth participants in the SDAIS program (**47 more than the previous year**) from 10 Western New York school districts and 26 schools. To facilitate deeper understanding of the impact of SDAIS, classroom teachers were surveyed using an online survey developed in Survey Monkey. Forty-nine (49) teachers were surveyed with 36 completing the survey for a 73% response rate, **7 percentage points higher than the previous year**. The survey examined two domains, Student Impact and Teacher Perceived Value. Under Student Impact there are 4 categories: Physical, Social/Emotional, Control, and Academic; and under Teacher Perceived Value, there are two categories:

Students and Classroom. Therefore, the following results are from the perspective of the teacher of SDAIS participants. There were 36 schools who participated in SDAIS with all but 7 completing the survey. The most common classroom type was 6-1-1 (44%), followed by 12-1-1 (25%), 12-1-2 (11%), and 8-1-1 (8%), and 12-1-4 (3%).

Executive Summary



SABAH's School Day Adaptive Ice Skating (SDAIS) program serves students who are both economically challenged and challenged by physical, developmental, or emotional disabilities or a combination of disabilities to promote positive physical, social/emotional, control, and academic outcomes. SDAIS has been in operation for over 50 years and has realized many successful results for participants including but not limited to positive increases in Physical, Social/Emotional, Control, and Academic outcomes. Over the years, there has been extensive evaluation of the program. The impacts have always been extremely positive, and teachers of the

participants have placed a high level of value on the SDAIS experience for their students.

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

The Participant evaluation examined Physical, Social/Emotional, Control, and Academic categories under the Student Impact Domain using multiple questions for each domain and examining different aspects of each variable. Specific Domains are as follows:

- **Physical:** The physical domain includes muscular strength, coordination, flexibility, balance, cardiovascular health, physical intensity, and endurance. Overall, the Physical category had the highest response from teachers who affirmed the positive impact on participants, with 97.2%, 7.2 percentage points above the previous year, stating that it has a positive impact on gross motor skills and stamina, and 94.5% of participants achieving their physical goals. Qualitative data reinforced this perspective with many teachers citing that their students when from using walkers in the beginning of the program to no walker or holding the hands of volunteers. The gains were universal across each of the 3 areas of physical outcomes examined by the research.
- **Emotional:** The emotional domain includes adjusting to other participants' emotions/moods, managing your own emotions/moods, and maintaining one's own emotions (avoiding extreme fluctuations in mood). Overall, 100% of teachers Strongly Agreed or Agreed that participants gained in empathy and peer-to-peer social interaction. The gains were universal across each of these two areas. **Social:** The social domain includes comfort with social engagement, developing friendships, and adjusting to social settings. Overall, 100% of the teachers agreed that participants improved their interaction with their peers and 92% improved their interaction with their teachers because of their participation in SDAIS. Finally, 97.2% of teachers stated that their students gained motivation.



- **Control:** The control domain includes following directions, staying on task, and patiently waiting one's turn. Overall, 97.2% of the teachers agreed that participants in SDAIS improved their control in positive decision making and attentiveness and 94.4% stated that students improved transitioning from one activity to another and classroom participation. The gains were universal across each of the 4 areas of control outcomes examined by the research.
- **Academic:** The academic domain includes demonstrated ELA and Math skills as well as overall academic achievement. Overall, 91% of teachers stated that SDAIS improved students' academic performance. The impact on ELA (88% Strongly Agreed or Agreed) slightly outpaced Math at (84% Strongly Agreed or Agreed), with achievement of academic goals hitting 91%.

The comprehensive programmatic impact along the 4 domains is very positive. When the quantitative research is combined with the qualitative research, we better understand how the domains build on each other and together create an impact where the sum is greater than the sum of its parts.

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

According to classroom teachers, SABAH's School Day Adaptive Ice Skating (SDAIS) program demonstrated a strong impact on all students who participated. SABAH staff, volunteers, and teachers witnessed the extraordinary benefit on participants. Moreover, those benefits were connected to stronger performance at school and enhanced benefits in other Student Impact categories. The following list summarizes key outcomes for student participants.

Physical

The category with the greatest impact was Physical. Measured along 3 areas, teachers Strongly Agreed 97.2% of the time that participants benefited across each Physical characteristic measured. **This gain is 7 percentage points above the previous year.** Teachers were asked, "Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT: Overall, many students benefit from participation in SABAH with regards to:"

- **Gross Motor Skills** (83.3% Strongly Agreed, 13.9% Agreed)
- **Stamina Motor Skills** (83.3% Strongly Agreed, 13.9% Agreed)
- **Physical Goal Attainment** (77.8% Strongly Agreed, 16.7% Agreed)

The achievement of Physical goals is a significant aspect of SABAH given the challenges participants with down syndrome and other cognitive disabilities face regarding the deterioration of their physical well-being and weight gain over time. The gains in this category of the Student Impact Domain are therefore significant.

My students had to challenge themselves to keep their balance and reach their goals of skating without a walker. **Teacher**

Social/Emotional

Social/Emotional Development had equally strong teacher responses as the Physical Category. Measured along four areas, teachers Strongly Agreed or Agreed approximately 74%, **a gain of 8 percentage points above the previous year**. Teachers were asked, "Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

On the whole, my students benefit from participation in SABAH with regards to:"

class areas social love SABAH
love SABAH see motivated
kids **students** program
interact help ice peers great
participate opportunity

- Empathy (74.3% Strongly Agreed, 25.7% Agreed)
- Peer-to-Peer Social Interaction (75% Strongly Agreed, 25% Agreed)
- Student-to-Teacher Interaction (72% Strongly Agreed, 19% Agreed)
- Motivation (75% Strongly Agreed, 22% Agreed)

The achievement of Social/Emotional goals has a direct impact on the behavior in the classroom. Teachers attributed an improvement in individual and overall classroom behavior to participation in SABAH. This improved behavior sets the stage for enhanced Academic achievement.

Control

Control is aligned with Social/Emotional Development which assists SABAH participants with appropriately managing their behavior while engaging in other social arenas like a classroom, restaurant, or store. Measured along four areas, teachers Strongly Agreed most of the time with 99% responding with Strongly Agree and Agree. Teachers were asked, "Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement. CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR: Overall, my students benefit from participation in SABA with regards to:"

- Positive Decision Making (47% Strongly Agreed, 50% Agreed)
- Transition from one Activity to Another (61% Strongly Agreed, 33% Agreed)
- Attentiveness (64% Strongly Agreed, 33% Agreed)
- Classroom Participation (53% Strongly Agreed, 42% Agreed)

The skills we learn at SABAH are life lessons! Patience, verbalization of needs/wants, dealing with challenges, persevering through difficulties... and ALL of this is used and brought back to the classroom as a model for trying our best every day.

Teacher

Like Social/Emotional Development, Control plays a significant role in the ability of students to pay attention and engage in their academic environment. Student participants demonstrated improved Control which is linked to better overall Academic Achievement.

Academic

Academic achievement is part of all students' educational experience, regardless of abilities. Participants in SABAH, from the perspective of their teachers, gained academically. When teachers were asked, "Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement. "My students experience academic growth due to the connection between educational concepts and physical movement provided by the SABAH program." The responses were telling.

- Academic Achievement (36% Strongly Agreed, 47% Agreed, and only 8% disagreed with 8% not responding)

Examining the subjects of ELA and Math, teachers reported strong results over 90% of the time. Teachers were asked, "Please indicate your level of agreement with the following

statements. ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT: Overall, my students benefit from participation in SABAH with regards to their:"

- ELA Academic Achievement (31% Strongly Agreed, 47% Agreed, 11% Disagree, 11% No Response)
- Math Academic Achievement (31% Strongly Agreed, 46% Agreed, 11% Disagree, 11% No Response)
- Academic Goal Attainment (36% Strongly Agreed, 47% Agreed, 8% Disagree, 8% No Response)
- My students experience academic growth due to the connection between educational concepts and physical movement provided by the SABAH program (61% Strongly Agreed, 31% Agreed, 3% Disagreed, 5% No Response)

SABAH strategically aligns their SDAIS program with the NYS Learning Standards. This alignment is accomplished by incorporating math lessons, for example, in the different stages of the program. The overwhelming belief reported by teachers is that when you combine learning with physical movement, the SABAH participants gained academically when they returned to their classrooms. The Academic category is perhaps the most challenging of the four categories to effect change in. Teachers expressed that the SABAH program did indeed have that positive impact on participants' academic achievement.



Overall Impact of SABAH from the Teachers Perspective

The true test to the impact of a program is what happens a week or more after the program. Teachers overwhelmingly provided testimonials to the long-term impact of the SDAIS program. Teachers were asked, "Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements."

- My students display positive behaviors on the day of our SABAH session (69% Strongly Agree - **7 percentage points above previous year**, 38% Agree)
- My students display positive behaviors during the week following our SABAH session (58% Strongly Agree, 38% Agreed, 3% Disagree)
- The benefits my student gets from participating in SABAH outweigh the time and effort required to take part in the program (83% Strongly Agree, 14% Agree)

This final summation of the program indicates that teachers felt 1) SABAH improved day of behavior, 2) SABAH improved behavior a week following the program, and 3) the SABAH program is well worth the effort to participate. This strongly supports the value of the SABAH SDAIS program for individual participants, families, and teachers. One teacher summed this concept of interconnected, exponential gain by participants by simply stating, “My students have changed for the better because of this program.”

The students look forward to Fridays. They always had a positive attitude and behaviors on and off the ice. They always clean up after themselves and thank the volunteers for helping them.

Teacher

The Teachers’ Perspective: A Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative Summary

- Like the previous year, there is overwhelming evidence that teachers believe SABAH participation improves many outcomes including but not limited to Physical, Academics (ELA & Math), Control, Social/Emotional, Time Management, Motivation, Skill Development & Transfer, Attitudinal, Positive Behaviors, and Teamwork. This is accomplished by replication and aligning rink/skating time with the academic goals of the teachers and accommodating those who need accommodations during skating. Teachers recognize the synergistic effect of the SDAIS program and have linked the program to positive classroom outcomes.
- Physical outcomes in strength and stamina proved to be the greatest impact, according to teachers. In 2024, 97.2% of teachers stated that SABAH SDAIS has a positive impact on gross motor skills and stamina, **7.2 percentage points above the previous year** and 94.5% of participants achieved their physical goals. These physical outcomes are important given the challenges individuals with disabilities have with maintaining good physical health and regulating strength, stamina, and healthy weights.
- Control outcomes were the most common among teacher comments which aligns with the quantitative data where 99% of teachers Strongly Agreed or Agreed with SDAIS’s positive impact on Control.
- Consistent with the quantitative results where 90% of teachers stated that their students achieved their academic goals, many teachers linked the time at SABAH with improved academic achievement. Responding to “My students experience academic growth due to the connection between educational concepts and physical



movement provided by the SABAH program,” Teachers responded with 92% Strongly Agreed or Agreed.

- Social/Emotional skills is extremely important to teachers. One teacher stated, “Social/emotional development is our biggest ‘why’.” This perspective was echoed by many teacher comments. This is congruent with the quantitative findings where close to 100% of the teachers Strongly Agreed or Agreed that SDAIS impacted 4 areas under the Social/Emotional category including empathy, student-to-peer interaction, student-to-teacher interaction, and motivation.

Teacher Comments

Physical

- Each one of the students were excited to participate and were eager to skate independently. When it was time to first hit the ice they were a bit scared approaching the ice, not wanting to fall. But once they got over the initial fear, they mainly stayed on the ice the entire session with a few breaks as needed when needed to adjust skates or they became fatigued. By the end of the program they were skating more independently and rarely falling!
- This program greatly helped my student's physical development by assisting with coordination, balance, and helped them understand the fundamentals of ice skating.
- Students who shy away from physical activity usually were more inclined to participate in skating due to the extended support provided by SABAH and volunteers. Also, students being met in their comfort zone helped them to participate, and then slowly pulling them out made it a safe and comfortable experience to grow physically.
- It's truly amazing, the things that come out of our partnership in SABAH. I have had students that begin using and integrating spontaneous speech like they never have before, simply because they are on the ice which forces them to be present in the moment. My students who are on the autism spectrum have started to notice things and seek out interactions with adults and peers as a result of this. Other students who are with me for behavioral challenges start to feel a sense of pride and confidence, knowing that something was hard for them at first but that they could push through and get better each week. It is huge for them to be able to show off all of their hard work in the community and in their families through the Celebration on Ice. The students in my room are not often "on the stage" in this way. If anything, it's the opposite, where numerous meetings need to happen throughout the school year to talk about what is going wrong. While some of that is unavoidable, I have directly seen the positive impact of balancing it out through this exciting opportunity to showcase the productive and exciting things that are also taking place. There's honestly just too much to even type and I could go on for DAYS about how SABAH has changed many lives, including my own! I am grateful everyday for such an incredible program and the volunteers, donors, and adults who make it possible. Thank you!!! 💙
- Our students struggle a great deal at the start of the school year with stamina when attempting tasks that require physical activity. Often times they are unable to walk around the school block without being exhausted and winded. We have noticed a remarkable improvement on their stamina and endurance as a result of their participation in SABAH! Our class recently completed a walk in the community of almost 2 miles and there were NO complaints and every student could keep up.



Social/Emotional

- All students increased their interactions with peers outside of our class, and adults outside of our class. These connections help build confidence :)
- They were happy and motivated to participate. It was a great way for us as teachers to interact with our students and for them to meet other students from another community.
- My students are always so sad when the SABAH season is over! It gives them something to look forward to each week and can completely change the trajectory of a child's life when they suddenly are excited to wake up and come to school in the morning! That positivity carries into all areas of the day and that's when the change really becomes noticeable!
- The students are kind to each other on the ice. They were motivated to learn to skate without the walker. Back in the classroom, my students would remind each other how they did well at SABAH, so they should try other things in the class and not give up.
- Social development is increased each week as they work on listening, peer connections and social interaction skills.
- My students were looking out for one another and interacting/discussing their experience on the ice!
- My students made growth with being able to interact with others and what to do.
- My students loved SABAH. They were able to interact with peers they typically do not interact with. As well as other staff members. They were able to generalize social skills throughout the settings.

Control

- I think being involved in the program helped boost my students' confidence. I would often refer to skating for them to help them through challenges they faced at school. It was a little difficult at first but with practice you can be successful at something you originally perceived as scary or hard.
- The students loved going ice skating on Fridays therefore, they chose to make good decisions, participate in class, and follow the rules of the classroom.
- All these skills transfer from the community back to the classroom each day! We can practice appropriate decisions in the classroom and generalize them in all other settings.
- The skills we learn at SABAH are life lessons! Patience, verbalization of needs/ wants, dealing with challenges, persevering through difficulties... and ALL of this is used and brought back into the classroom as a model for trying our best every day!
- Listening skills are essential for SABAH success and it carries over in the classroom.



Academic

- It was a fun way for them to engage in the academic activities. They were more eager to participate because they were on the ice versus sitting at a desk in the classroom. They were much more motivated to engage in the activity.
- I like having the option to modify the academic activities we do during SABAH to meet our students academic and IEP goals. It provides them with opportunities to practice the skills in different settings, learning to apply the strategies across multiple areas to practice generalization.
- The academic activities utilizes along with the physical movement helped make learning and skating fun.
- The staff does an excellent job incorporating academic and IEP skills into the program. They display respectfulness and model appropriateness for all students.

- Our High school students benefit so much from the social and physical aspects of going to SABAH every week! For some of our students that need ELA and Math reinforcement the academic activities help them with their letter and number review.
- The academic activities and gross motor skills help the students make connections across all modalities.

Overall

- The benefits of SABAH far outweigh the time it takes away from the classroom. Kids are learning life skills while at SABAH that cannot be taught in a classroom, such as how to behave and self-regulate in new environments, around new people, and to try things that are new and hard. My students were better for participating in SABAH because they were able to find success in something outside of their norm, which provides motivation, encouragement and confidence!
- The students are motivated to do the academic tasks, they gain self confidence, and they learn that they can improve a skill with practice. SABAH is the highlight of their week.
- SABAH is a true motivator for the kids. They absolutely love attending and are so eager to do their best work leading up to our weekly sessions so that they can participate.
- They talk all week about "FRIDAY IS SABAH". It gets to the point that we have to stop talking about it because that is all they want to talk about.
- Our students are able to attend this community outing with their peers, which is a bonus to their growth and participation in off-site events. Attendance at SABAH requires a total 'buy-in' from our staff, as well as the SABAH teachers and support staff, in order to gain the most out of our students participation. The energy is infectious. The end of session individual skate attempts with Carrie are looked forward to as several students are able to spend time 1:1 with her and advance their skills and abilities on the ice.
- We have seen such growth from SABAH. It really has made a great impact for my students. It is worth the sweat!

Teachers' Response to "What does SABAH mean to you and your students?"



- SABAH is very important to my students and it gives us the opportunity to get out into the community and participate in something they may never experienced before. It makes my heart happy as a teacher watching the growth they made.

- It is the most wonderful thing to watch young kids learning something brand new, find their confidence, and succeed. Kids who you could never imagine being ice skaters, doing it! The joy I saw from each of my students on the ice each day is priceless, and something I look forward to seeing year after year. It's one of the best parts of my job.
- SABAH day gives the students something to look forward to each week. The confidence my students gain on the ice is so worth the trouble. When gen ed students hear that my students skate (which they themselves may not be able to do), they think more highly of my students.
- It's a time to be involved in the community and celebrate their abilities.
- SABAH is a great opportunity for our students to be a part of a group and feel included. Students and staff are eager every year for SABAH to begin.
- SABAH is such an important aspect in my students' week at school. They look forward to learning a new skill and being able to find success.
- It is an opportunity for our students to SHINE and showcase their hard work! The students and faculty at our school are blown away by their talent on the ice, and how quickly they learn to skate.
- SABAH provides great opportunities for skaters to gain confidence in their ability to try something that may be difficult. My students were so proud of their accomplishments every week.
- SABAH means a shot at normalcy :)



Recommendations

There were forty-nine (49) teachers surveyed with 36 completing the survey for a 73% response rate, **7 percentage points higher than the previous year**. This completion rate provides substantial evidence that supports the results and allows for recommendations as it pertains to the program and continuous improvement efforts. The following recommendations should be couched in the fact that the SDAIS program has proven extremely beneficial to its participants.

- The results of this analysis are very strong, and teachers clearly attribute a strong value to SDAIS participation for their students. Many teachers felt that the program had a synergistic effect on their students providing and overall benefit across many domains. The Physical category continues to remain the strongest impact on participants. The lowest impact area is Academic. However, the Academic category performed very well with 91% of teachers stating that their students achieved their Academic Goals. **The recommendation would be to continue to focus on academic outcomes and work with teachers collaboratively to enhance this aspect of the program.** However, it should be noted that the academic outcomes are very strong year in and year out.



- There is a very clear relationship between each of the categories that provides a synergistic effect and impact. **SABAH should explore these relationships to offer a better overall outcome for students.**

Summary

Programs for youth with disabilities have always been perceived as beneficial to participants. However, while some research exists, there is a lack of evidence-based research that supports this perception. This evaluation begins to reveal the comprehensive benefit that SDAIS has on participants. Moreover, the benefits cut across the key areas including Physical, Academic, Social/Emotional, and Control where teachers report observed gains in their students across all areas. Finally, teachers highlighted that the SDAIS program provides an overall impact on students that enhances classroom behavior, control, communication, and academic outcomes. As one teacher stated, ***“I cannot say in less than 1 million words how AMAZING the SABAH program has been for my class.”***



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, April 2024.

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