Participation of Culturally, Linguistically and Economically Diverse Parents in the
Special Education Planning Process

by

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ABSTRACT

Although federal law governing the education of students with disabilities

recognizes the important role parents play in the special education planning process,

there is considerable evidence that culturally, linguistically and economically diverse

parents are not as fully or meaningfully involved in the process as provided for by

law. The qualitative method of naturalistic inquiry was used to study the experiences

of 14 families (22 parents) and eight parent advocates with the special education

planning process in three urban school districts. Results indicated that the nature and

outcomes of parent participation in the special education planning process, including

that of culturally, linguistically and economically diverse parents, depended on how

parents were treated in the process by school professionals, which in turn was shaped

by the interaction of institutional and demographic factors. Institutionally, principals'

attitude and behavior toward special education and students with disabilities shaped

the professional culture of the school and thus the attitudes and behavior of its

professionals toward special education and the students it serves and their parents.

Demographically, professionals' actual treatment of parents was based on their

reaction to three interrelated sets of parental demographic attributes: race, ethnicity

and language; education, occupation and income; and the presence and nature of a

parental disability. Among demographic factors, social class, as reflected in income

and especially education and professional status, outweighed race, ethnicity and

language, and the presence of a parental disability outweighed race and ethnicity and social class.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to the fourteen families who opened their homes and hearts in order for me to complete my study. I created the following poem using direct quotes from each family obtained during their interviews. Their voices ring loud and strong, but as you will see, these parents remain unheard as they continue through the special education planning process.

From a Parent's Perspective

It was a mess from the beginning.
I trusted the school and put faith in the school.
[My] requests were disregarded.
They thought I was ridiculous.

I was made to feel guilty.
I was treated like a leper.
I don't think anyone one else cared.
It was like a revolving door, get in
…and get out.

I think they didn't want to help [me].
It was like [my] son wasn't even a person.
They didn't care they were not following the rules.
They just didn't care.

I didn't know what I wanted.
I didn't know what my son needed.
You have to ask for what you want.
How can you ask for something if you don't know?

I didn't know the law.
I didn't know I had rights.
I was so confused.
[I] just didn't know.

I wasn't able to understand.
They blamed it on my disability.
I became frustrated.
No communication, no replies.

I was afraid to ask questions.
I didn't want to sound dumb.
I was intimidated.
So I just listened.

He is my child.
She is my child.
I am his parent.
I am her parent.

We are told we are participants,
But in fact we are not.

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Acknowledgements

Do not follow where the path may lead. Go, instead, where there is no path and leave a trail. Ralph Waldo Emerson

I owe a heartfelt debt of gratitude to Drs. Tom Skrtic, Paul Markham, Charlie Greenwood and Cheryl Utley who afforded me what I would call "an opportunity of a lifetime." I will be forever thankful for the experience I have received and the knowledge I have gained while at the University of Kansas these past six years.

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To my parents – who have always believed in me, instilled in me the importance of an education and supported me throughout all of my journeys, thank

you. My dad once told me that an education was the one thing that could never be taken away from me. I often reflected upon this insight he offered me throughout my studies and research. Although my dad passed away in 1992, his spirit has been instrumental in my finishing this journey. My mom continues to love, support and encourage me to this day and I have been blessed to have her along side of me throughout my journey.

To my sisters - You all have been with me every step of the way, supporting me, encouraging me, helping me and reminding me why this work was so important. Thank you.

To my children - I want to thank all of you for supporting me along this journey of mine. . . for listening to my whining, for telling me to hang in there when I was ready to throw in the towel and for ignoring my ups and downs. Simply, for being someone I could count on. I could not have made it to the end without each of you.

And to my grandchildren - Thank you for reminding me to take time to laugh and enjoy life and forever keeping me young.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has compiled

distributions of the U.S. public school enrollment by race or ethnicity, most currently

for 2007-2008. It found that Whites (non-Hispanic) comprised 55.8 percent, Blacks

(non-Hispanic) comprised 17 percent, Hispanics comprised 21.0 percent, Asians or

Pacific Islanders comprised 4.8 percent, and American Indian or Alaskan Natives

comprised 1.2 percent of the enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools.

Therefore, NCES predicts that in 2026, the racial composition of America's schools

will be opposite of what it was in 1990 when 70% of the student population were

White. Furthermore, this same population will comprise 25% of U.S. classrooms as

second language learners (Garcia, 1995).

Students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds have come to represent

a large proportion of school-aged population. The number of students with

disabilities from ethnic and cultural minority backgrounds has been increasing.

According to the twenty-fourth Annual Report to Congress, out of the population of

students aged six through 21 served under IDEA, 36.9% were from ethnically and

culturally diverse backgrounds in the 2000-2001 school year (U.S. Department of

Education, 2002). By 2005–06, some 6.7 million youth received IDEA services,

corresponding to 14 percent of total public school enrollment. Among these students

served under IDEA in 2004–05, 39% were from ethnically and culturally diverse

backgrounds. (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). With this increase in the

minority public school population receiving services under IDEA, it stands to reason that the increase in the minority parent population will be even greater. Parents from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds may have different perspectives on parent participation and may have unique barriers that limit their involvement in their child's education. Therefore, knowing and understanding these different perspectives, barriers and the role of parents of children from diverse backgrounds in their children's education is particularly important because of the disproportionately high number of students from minority backgrounds participating in special education programs (Harry, 1992; Skiba, Simmons et al., 2008).

Statement of the Problem

Although federal law governing the education of students with disabilities recognizes the important role parents play in the IEP process, there is considerable evidence that culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse parents are not as fully or meaningfully involved in the special education process as provided for by law (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002; Harry, 1995, 2002; Lynch & Stein, 1987; Zetlin, Padron & Wilson, 1996). Moreover, the limited participation of these parents in the special education process reflects a general pattern of lower levels of parental involvement in their children's education among Hispanic, African American, and Asian American parents, as well as among parents living in poverty (Ascher, 1988; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Lamorey, 2002; Moles, 1993). To the extent that this perception is generally accurate, lack of participation may be due to several factors. These include lack of knowledge by parents of their rights, as well as conflicts between the attitudes and

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perceptions of professionals and those of the parents about a wide range of topics

dealing with special education. In addition, professionals often perceive parental

deference to them and preoccupation with such basic needs as feeding and clothing

the child as apathy or lack of interest in education.

The topic of these parents' participation in the special education process is

important for several related reasons. Although the law assures parents' right to

participate, it specifies participation procedurally, not substantively, and thus does not

address the quality, outcomes, or even indications of meaningful parent participation.

In other words, schools can be in compliance with the letter of the law without

achieving meaningful parent participation. The school-related experiences of parents

of children with disabilities are usually more difficult, extensive, and complex than

those of parents of children without disabilities. And these problems tend to be

further complicated for culturally, linguistically, and/or economically diverse parents

(Harry, 1992; Lynch & Stein, 1987).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the proposed study is to understand the nature and effects of

economically disadvantaged parents' and/or minority parents' participation in the

special education process in urban schools, from the perspectives of parents and other

professional participants in the process. The following questions were used to guide

the researcher at the outset of the study; however, since an emergent design was

utilized, they were to be refined over time and possibly replaced by or supplemented

with other relevant questions. Although in the end the questions remained largely the

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same, what changed was the relative emphasis on each question, with most of the

research effort focusing on questions 1-3 and relatively less on question 4. Given the

additional effort devoted to questions 1-3, virtually no field research effort was

allocated to question 5. Instead, attention to that question was limited to the review of

literature presented in Chapter II.

1. What factors facilitate and obstruct low income and/or minority parent participation in the special education process?

2. What are the attitudes and behaviors of professionals toward these parents and how do they affect their participation in the special education process?

3. Are there organizational factors that facilitate or obstruct the participation of these parents in the special education process?

4. Are there IDEA procedural factors that facilitate or obstruct the participation of these parents in the special education process?

5. What are the differences (if any) between these parents' participation in the special education process and their general participation in their child's school?

Significance of the Study

Understanding the nature and effects of economically disadvantaged and/or

minority parents' participation in the special education process from their perspectives

and those of the professionals with whom they are involved will provide new insights

into such parent participation, including insights about the cultural, professional,

organizational, and procedural factors which facilitate and obstruct it and thus some

guidance in intervening into the process to improve its cooperative aspects and

substantive outcomes. At a minimum, it would permit one to view the experience of

parental participation from the perspective of economically disadvantaged parents and/or minority parents, thereby highlighting some of the difficulties they may face in dealing with education organizations and professionals.

Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research seeks answers to the basic questions of what; where, when, and how by examining constructions of social phenomena and the individuals who collectively construct them. Qualitative research implies that the analysis largely will be based on non-numerical data, thus for the most part words will be used as opposed to numbers. Qualitative methods are preferred to quantitative methods when the phenomena to be studied are complex human and organizational interactions and are therefore not easily transferable into numbers (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Skrtic, 1985). Emphasis is placed on description and discovery rather than testing and verification in qualitative research (Pytlik, 1997).

Naturalistic Inquiry

Naturalistic inquiry is "the method and techniques of observing, documenting, and interpreting attributes, patterns, characteristics, and meanings of specific contextual or gestaltic features under study" (Leininger, 1985, p.5). The aim of this type of qualitative research is to observe, document, analyze, and interpret multiple constructions of social phenomena in particular social contexts, from the points of view of the participants in those contexts. As such, naturalistic inquiry is the preferred mode of inquiry for studying multiple interpretations of social events and

processes in particular social contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Reinharz, 1979). Natural contexts—including their material, social, political, cultural, and historical aspects—provide the data for analysis and interpretation (Leininger, 1985).

Given the substantive problem of inadequate parental involvement in the process and the aim of explaining this by understanding the process from the multiple perspectives of its participants, naturalistic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Skrtic, 1985; Skrtic, Guba & Knowlton, 1985) or constructivist (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) inquiry was selected as the methodology for this study because it provides the best fit among problem, method, and purpose.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature reviewed in this section is considered within three sections. The first section, "Special Education Law and Parent Participation", is a brief review of parent participation as addressed by special education legislation. It will provide a framework for understanding how parents' role has evolved and expanded over the past 35 years. Due to major educational legislation, the expectation of increased parent participation is present in both general and special education. With an increase in the minority public school population, it stands to reason that the increase in the minority parent population will be even greater. Parents from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds may have different perspectives on parent participation. The next section, "Economically Disadvantaged Parents' and/or Minority Parents' Participation in General Education", is a review of literature on the participation of parents at school relative to the education of their children in general. Since legislation has insured parent participation in the special education process, the third section, "Economically Disadvantaged Parents' and/or Minority Parents' Participation in Special Education", will focus specifically on the experiences of these parents of children with disabilities in urban public schools.

Parents' Role in Influencing Special Education Legislation

In reviewing parent participation in special education legislation over the past 35 years, a framework for understanding how parents' role in decision making has evolved. It is obvious that parents of children with disabilities have been working

collectively and have been very instrumental in influencing changes from the legislature to address equal educational opportunities for their children. The first such parent group, known as the Cuyahoga County Ohio Council for the Retarded Child, was composed of five mothers of children with mental retardation. The group came together to support each other, work for change, and protest their children's exclusion from public school (Osgood, 2008; Yell, Rogers & Rogers, 1998). Their protest did not go unnoticed. A special class for their children was established, even though the parents were required to fund the class themselves.

It was not until forty years later, that parents and parent groups initiated two of the most significant legal events in the history of disability rights. The Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC), a parental advocacy group, sued the state and won. The case, later known as PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, established by law the right to "a free appropriate education for all children between the ages of six and 21 with mental retardation. During the same time, another class action suit was filed by a small group of parents of children with disabilities in the District of Colombia Board of Education. Commonly known as Mill v. Board of Education, the suit was based on the fourteenth amendment. It claimed that children with disabilities were excluded from public education with due process of law. The outcome of the suit was favorable for 18,000 students with disabilities in the district by affording them the opportunity of a public education and due process safeguards (Osgood, 2008; Yell, Rogers & Rogers, 1998).

Also instrumental in the recognition and inclusion of new disability categories in federal legislation was the influence of parents and their advocacy efforts. In 1963, at a national conference in Chicago, parents joined together and established the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities. During the conference, the term "learning disabilities" was first used by Samuel Kirk, a conference speaker and the term was enthusiastically accepted by parents. The beginning of the disabilities movement and field began with these two events (Mercer, 1994; Osgood, 2008). It is quite clear that parental advocacy through the last forty years has provided the foundation and strength necessary for passage and reauthorization of special education legislation.

Special Education Law and Parent Participation

Parents of children with disabilities played a very important role in bringing about changes that guaranteed their children a place in public education. Likewise, legislators who passed the landmark special education, Public Law 94-142, recognized the importance of incorporating parent participation into the special education process.

Public Law 94-142 was signed into law on November 29, 1975. Regardless of the severity of their disabilities, children were guaranteed a free appropriate public education and an education designed to meet their unique individual and educational needs. It also assured nondiscriminatory evaluation, individualized educational planning, and education in the least restrictive environment. Several parent rights were guaranteed, including the right to participate in the process of evaluating their

children, the development of their individualized education plan (IEP), to give or refuse permission for their children's initial evaluation and placement, and to access their children's school records. Foremost, when parents were not in agreement with the local education agency (LEA), they were given the right to procedural due process.

By Congress's inclusion of parent participation provisions in P.L. 94-142, parents were given insurmountable rights to participation, enforceable by law. Turnbull, Turnbull and Wheat (1982) concluded that Congress viewed parent participation as beneficial to children with disabilities and their parents and schools. They also felt that parents and schools working together collaboratively on behalf of children was a good professional practice. Even though parental consent was required in this process, parents had yet to be viewed as partners and decision-makers. It was not until the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (IDEA) that parent participation was expanded.

Under P.L. 94-142, parent participation meant that parents would serve on the committee that developed the child's IEP. However, the 1990 IDEA expanded this limited sense of participation by allowing more meaningful parental involvement in IEP development, which included specification of the child's IEP goals and objectives. Under this decision, parent participation took on the larger meaning of parent involvement in decision-making regarding the education of students with disabilities (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1998, 2001).

This legislation, which reauthorized and amended IDEA, made a significant change in the meaning and extent of parent participation. The Congressional Committee Report on IDEA 97 provided an opportunity for strengthening the role of the parents, and emphasized that one of the purposes of the amendments was to expand opportunities for parents and key school personnel to work in new partnerships at the state and local levels (Federal Register, March 12, 1999, p. 12472).

Prior to IDEA 97, the only guarantee parents had was to be a part of the group that developed their child's IEP. However, with IDEA 1997, Congress further strengthened and specified parents' role in their child's IEP process by granting them the right to participate in all meetings concerning identification, evaluation, and educational placement of their children. This powerful message conveyed what Congress envisioned as the role and value of parent participation to be, that of a reciprocal partner.

The parents of a child with a disability were expected to be equal participants, along with school personnel, in developing, reviewing, and revising the IEP for their child. As an active participant, parents could provide necessary information regarding the strengths of their child and would be able to express their concerns for enhancing the education of their child. Parents would participate in discussions in regards to the child's need for special education and related services. Finally, parents would be able to join other participants in deciding how their child would participate in the general curriculum, what services and setting the agency would provide, what state and district-wide assessments would be administered to their child (Federal

Register, March 12, 1999, p. 12473). The value of parents participating as equal partners in the special education process was now set by Congress in IDEA 97 through extension of parent's rights to participate in additional decision making forums.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) was signed into law on December 3, 2004 and went into effect July 1, 2005. One of the stated continuing purposes of this act is to protect children's right to an appropriate education and their parents' right to participate in the process [§ 1401 (d) (1) (B)]. Moreover, IDEA now requires parents to be far more meaningfully involved in and knowledgeable of the law and the special education process, in that, the 2004 amendments:

> place increased responsibility on parents and hold them accountable for their action with respect to their child's education. Parents must now make decisions that define whether their child is admitted to special education and, if so, what the student will receive there. Accordingly, the amendments now require parents to inform themselves about IDEA and its provisions, and to be knowledgeable of the law and the options that IDEA grants (Turnbull, Huerta, & Stowe, 2005).

Although federal law acknowledges the importance of parent participation in the IEP process, there is considerable evidence that economically disadvantaged parents and/or minority parents participate less fully and meaningfully in the special education process than provided for by law (Artilles & Ortiz, 2002; Harry, 2002; Lynch & Stein, 1987; Zetlin, Padron & Wilson, 1996). Moreover, the limited participation of these parents in the special education process reflects a general pattern of limited school involvement (Ascher, 1988; Eccles & Harold, 1993;

Lamorey, 2002; Moles, 1993). As such, it will be helpful to consider research on this general pattern before turning to that on economically disadvantaged parents and/or minority parents participation in the special education process.

<div align="center">Economically Disadvantaged Parents' and/or Minority Parents' Participation in
General Education</div>

According to Moles (1993), a significant decrease has been seen in minority parent participation within their children's schools. However, there has been a continuous increase in parent participation among White parents. More recently, this same pattern of increased parent participation among the White parents and a continued decreased amount of contact minority have with their child's schools is also supported by (Drummond & Stipek, 2004). Associated with parents of lower socioeconomic status as well as with Hispanic, African Americans, and Asian American parents is a low level of parental participation in the schools (Ascher, 1988; Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Eccles & Harrold, 1993).

Since research has cited evidence that there is a definite link between parent participation and academic achievement, these decreases in parent participation is one of value (Ascher, 1988; Chavkin, 1993; Floyd, 1998; Jeynes, 2005; Peterson, 1989). In some cases, school administrators are lead to believe that minority parents don't care about their children's education because they choose not participate in traditional parent-school activities such as the parent-teachers association (Chavkin, 1993; Lawson, 2003).

Conversely, in studies by Inger (1992) and Jeynes (2005), it was found that regardless of the economic, racial or cultural background of a family, active parent participation does lead to increased school attendance and student achievement with a reduction in school dropout rates. However, the benefits to be gained by participation of economically disadvantaged parents and minority parents in their child's education include an increase in language achievement as well as improved home-school relationships (Bermudez, 1994; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002).

Discrepancies in Perceptions of Parent Participation

The decrease in minority parental participation is often viewed by many teachers as evidence of a lack of interest in their child's education (Ascher, 1988; Carger, 1997; Floyd, 1998; Parette & Petch-Hogan, 2000; Moles, 1993). For example, Delgado-Gaitan (2001) conducted an ethnographic study of a Hispanic community and found that most teachers felt that parents did not work hard enough at home with their children and their schoolwork. In interviewing the teachers, parental participation was very important in connecting the school with home. Educators often misread the reserved, non-confrontal manners of Hispanic parents as non-participation. This, in turn will be taken to mean that these parents are uncaring about their children's education (Inger, 1992; Carger, 1997; Lopez, 2001) Conversely, the perceptions of Hispanic parents' and their role in their child's education is one in which they care very deeply about their children's education (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001), thus having high goals for their children (Shannon, 1996), and wanting to be very involved in their education (Lopez, 2001).

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As stated by Trumbull et al. (2001), "Studies of Hispanic families have shown that parents are very interested in being involved in their children's education" (p. 32). According to Halle, Kurtz-Costes & Mahoney (1997, and Jeynes (2005), African American parents as well want their children to attend college, a finding consistent in other studies of economically disadvantaged African American parents.

The fact that parent participation is difficult to define is part of the discrepancy between the perceptions of teachers and parents. Some researchers have found that there are differing views of parental participation (Parette & Petch-Hogan, 2000; Scribner, Young & Pedroza, 1999) and sometimes these views vary culturally (Trumbull et. al., 2001). In general, parent participation may be defined quite differently to many people (Ascher, 1988, Lawson, 2003). For example, it can mean parents as members of their schools site council and participating in the decisions and operation of their schools. For some, parent participation can be simply defined as serving as a classroom aide or accompanying the classroom on a fieldtrip. Increasingly, parent participation has come to mean parents initiating learning activities at home such as, reading to their child or helping with homework. Therefore, if schools and parents have conflicting views about what parent participation entails, it would not be unusual that there might be conflicting goals relating to parent participation (Trumbull et al., 2001). For example, Scribner, et al. (1999) found parent participation defined differently in high-performing Hispanic schools in Texas. Parent participation was defined by the teachers as participating in school events and meetings or as a tutor in the classroom; whereas, the parents tended

to define participation as being involved in more informal activities such as "checking homework assignments, reading and listening to children read, and sending them to school well fed, clean, and rested" (p. 37). Therefore, teachers viewed parent participation as a means of improving academic achievement and parents viewed their participation as "a means of supporting the total well-being of children" (Scribner, et al., 1999, p. 37).

Parent participation is often measured through the number of attending parents at school events. Therefore, the full picture of parent contribution in schools may not be seen if participation is the only indicator. Lee (2005) found that parents from Vietnam, Japan, Philippines, China and Korea have a difficult understanding of well established U.S. parent participation programs such as the Parents and Teachers Association (PTA). Asian parents do not take active roles in their schools in part due to a much higher level of respect they give their teachers than here in the United States. Not only are there differences in defining parent participation, the roles of teachers and parents are also difficult to define. It was found in several studies of Hispanic parents that they see a definite divide between the role of the school and the role of the parent. In a Hispanic family, the parents role is to nurture and teach good behavior, respect and morals, whereas they feel the schools' role is to instill knowledge (Carger, 1997; Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Trumbull et. al., 2001). Most often, these parents are unsure of their role when ask to take on those responsibilities they view as the schools responsibility (Sosa, 1997). In several studies of Hispanic parents, it was found that they see a definite divide between the role of the school and

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the role of parents (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Hughes, Valle-Riestra, & Argueles, 2008). According to Trumbull, et. al., (2001), while teachers view parents asking questions about assignments and their child's grades as showing interest in their education, culturally, Hispanics view this as a sign of disrespect.

Barriers to Parental Participation

Differences in perception are not the only barriers that economically disadvantaged parents and/or minority parents have to overcome. Researchers have identified additional barriers to minority parent's involvement in their child's schooling. These barriers can be divided into the following three categories: demographic factors, logistical factors and institutional factors.

Demographic Factors

Language/Culture. In seeking to participate in their child's education, these parents often find themselves facing a language barrier. (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Hyslop, 2000). A major deterrent to parents who have not achieved English proficiency themselves is the inability to understand the language of the school. Therefore, communication regarding student grades, behavior and homework becomes a challenge when school personnel do not speak a second language. (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Inger, 1992; Jeynes, 2005)

In addition, many schools do not provide interpreters for school related meetings (Scribner, et. al., 1999); therefore, non-English-speaking parents attending school related meetings cannot understand what is being said (Aspiazu et al., 1998;

Hughes, Valle-Riestra & Arguelles, 2008). While parents have difficulty communicating within the school, their inability to understand the language of a homework assignment has kept them from helping their children at home (Aspiazu et al., 1998; Hughes, Valle-Riestra & Argueles, 2008; Simich-Dudgeon, 1993).

Parents who don't speak fluent English often feel inadequate within the school environment. In some families, the roles of parents and children become reversed due to the parents' limited English proficiency. For example, when Hispanic children translate for their parents during conferences, it places the children in a position of equal status with adults which is seen as going against their cultural norm (Finders & Lewis, 1994; Harry, 1992, 2002). Many times cultural mismatches occur as often as linguistic conflicts. Some Asian parents may also feel intimidated by their children, who seem to adapt to the new culture better than they are able to do (Tomlinson, 2007 & Yao, 1988). Therefore, most often parents who are deferential to teachers and schools are less likely to attend school functions or attend parent conferences (Fish, 2005; Ritter, Mont-Reynaud & Dornbusch, 1993).

Along with language barriers, there are additional cultural barriers. Often, a disconnect is found between the school culture and home culture, and most schools do not seem to give respect to the home culture (Lawson, 2003; Leitch & Tangri, 1988). The idea of working cooperatively versus competitively is one of the greatest differences between the school culture and the Hispanic home culture. Trumbull, et. al. (2001) state that the Hispanic family values "collectivism." Collectivism focuses on "interdependent relations, social responsibility, and the well-being of the group"

(p. 4) versus individualism which focuses on "individual fulfillment and choice" (p. 4). In order to do well academically, Hispanic children must adapt to the fact that most schools focus on an individualistic, competitive approach

In the Asian American family, parents believe their role is to listen and follow an educators' professional judgment. However, this great respect for teachers can actually pose a potential barrier. An Asian American parent sometimes feels reluctant to challenge a teacher's authority thereby feeling that communicating with teachers may be perceived as disrespectful. Most often, these parents are seen as attentive listeners and seldom initiate contact with teachers and administrators, offer comments and rarely ask questions (Tomlinson, 2007; Yao, 1988).

Parent's Level of Education. A parent's level of education is one obstacle to developing an educational partnership with parents (Floyd, 1998; Moles, 1993; Jeynes, 2005). Trumbull et al. and Lopez (2001) found that often Hispanic families as well as migrant families have limited formal schooling. If a parent does not have the necessary skills to help with their child's education at home, then the schools expectations may be unrealistic (Parette & Petch-Hogan, 2000; Sosa, 1997). Researchers found that parents with little or no education tend to feel intimidated when communicating at their child's school and may avoid connecting with teachers or other staff members (Floyd, 1998; Moles, 1993).

Experiential Issues. Another barrier to actually getting parents into the school may be experiential issues. Parents may experience low self-esteem or anxiety when attending their child's school especially if they were unsuccessful in their own

education (Boyd & Correa, 2005; Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Hyslop, 2000 Lopez, 2001; Scribner, et al., 1999). Quite possibly these parents were a victim to racial and linguistic discrimination as a child and have become disenchanted with the educational system (Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Garcia, 1995).

When parents only receive negative news about their children from schools, then negative feelings toward home to school interactions is often reinforced (Lawson, 2003; Henderson & Berla, 1997). These parents begin to feel alienated from the mainstream further preventing them from contacting school personnel (Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Peterson & Warnsby, 1992). Often, schools either openly or silently discourage parental participation therefore reinforcing the parent's negative perceptions.

Poverty Issues. While many studies have shown that low-income parents value education as a means of economic and social mobility, their actual involvement most often falls short of the schools expectations (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Hughes, Valle-Riestra & Arguelles, 2008; Spann, 2003). Differences in economic backgrounds between teachers and parents often lead to a parents' discomfort when interacting with school personnel. For example, Lareau (1987, 2000) reported that parents in the low-income community were less likely to engage in teaching activities in the home, were far less familiar with school curriculum and therefore would be more less likely to attend events at school. In addition, some of these lower-income parents explained that they had less time and flexibility to meet involvement expectations; while a few of these parents indicated that their responsibilities were

limited to fulfilling basic, daily needs such as providing clothing and food. Outside of providing for their family's basic needs, there is little energy left to handle problems within the family (Parette & Petch-Hogan, 2000; Webb & Sherman, 1989).

Parents with Disabilities. There has been an increase in the number of parents with disabilities since 1990. This increase may be due to the independent living movement, the civil rights movement for those with disabilities, and an increasing participation of adults with disabilities in all aspects of life. According to the 1993 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), a multi-panel, longitudinal survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, there are about 6.9 million adults with a disability who are parents. These parents with a disability represent about 11% of the total estimated population of 57.9 million parents. They represent about 30% of the approximately 23 million adults with a disability between the ages of 18 and 64 years (Toms-Barker & Maralani, 2000). There are about six million children under 18 who live with at least one parent who has a physical disability and about half of all parents who are disabled have physical disabilities (Tuleja, Rogers, Vensand, & DeMoss, 2000).

Everyday parents with disabilities encounter barriers when dealing with established facilities for their children. Most often, the majority of children of disabled parents are not disabled. Teachers and school administrators are more likely unaware of or insensitive to the needs of parents with diverse disabilities. This unawareness can be due to the physical inaccessibility of the school. For example, the sites for a parent-teacher meeting might be inaccessible for a parent in a

wheelchair or there may be no interpreters for Deaf parents or proper media

equipment for parents who are blind. Therefore, parents with disabilities are often

prohibited in participating in many school activities. Furthermore, a lack of education

or familiarity with diverse disabilities often causes school officials to make inaccurate

or negative assumptions about the capabilities of parents with disabilities. (Harry,

2002; Kirshbaum, 1994).

Logistical Factors

Many parents would like to become more involved in their child's school, but

are most often hindered by various logistical issues. One of the issues cited by

Hispanic parents is a lack of time (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; Sosa, 1997). New

immigrants and migrant workers often work long hours and a lack of time is seen as a

hindrance for them as well (Fuentes, Cantu, & Stechuk, 1996; Lopez, Scribner,

Mahitivanicheha, 2001; Weiss, Mayer, Kreider, Vaughan, Dearing, Hencke, & Pinto,

2003). More importantly, parents can become overwhelmed in dealing with daily

tasks alone especially if both parents are working or there is a single parent with

multiple responsibilities. In both cases, they have little time left to getting involved at

their child's school (Floyd, 1998; Parette & Petch-Hogan, 2000; Scribner, et al.,

1999).

Additional issues are related to childcare, transportation and the scheduling of

events. One obstacle for stay-at-home mothers who would like to volunteer at their

children's school would be their inability to afford day care for t heir younger

children (Floyd, 1998; Hampton, Mumford, & Bond, 1998; Moles, Parette & Petch-

Hogan, 2000; Scribner, et. al., 1999; Sosa, 1997). While appropriate childcare is an obstacle to volunteering during the day, it becomes an additional obstacle for these parents to attending evening events such as parent conferences.

A lack of transportation also prohibits volunteering at the school (Floyd, 1998; Moles, 1993). If the economically disadvantaged and/or minority family only has one car and it is used to take a parent to work, making trips to school in order to volunteer or attend meetings is difficult unless there is easy access to public transportation (Parette & Petch-Hogan, 2000; Scribner, et al., 1999; Spann, 2003). Lastly, a few studies have found issues with the scheduling of events and activities (Floyd, 1998; Parette, Petch-Hogan, 2000). Bright (1996) Parette, Petch-Hogan (2000); and Spann, (2003) agree that schools need to schedule activities and events more accessible to parents at a variety of times to allow for the possibility of parents to attend.

Institutional Factors

One of the first obstacles that many minority parents deal with is an unwelcoming and often hostile school environment (Boyd & Correa, 2005; Chavkin, 1993; Parette & Petch-Hogan, 2000). For example, as pointed out by Parette and Petch-Hogan (2000) and Spann (2003), parents often feel anxious, unwelcome and misinformed when they enter their child's school. The feelings of being unwelcomed in their child's school, reporting "lack of friendliness" and teachers relating to them in a hostile manner has caused parents to not get involved by choosing to withdraw their participation from school-related events (Calabrese, 1990; Parette & Petch-Hogan, 2000; Scribner, et al., 1999). According to Spann (2003), communication with the

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parents is often judgmental, English only, and filled with educational jargon. Parents

feel disengaged from the schools due to an educator's negative or condescending

attitude.

In addition, because many administrators, teachers and school staff are from

middle class backgrounds, the school's customs, expectations, and experiences might

not fit with those of economically disadvantaged parents and/or minority parents

(Coleman & Churchill, 1997; Moles, 1997; Rock, 2000). Many educators perceive

that low-income parents do not value education highly and have little to contribute to

the education of their children (Ascher, 1988; Drummond & Stipek, 2004). As a

result, parents are reluctant to be active participants in their child's education and see

no opportunity to be included.

Summary of Findings on Economically Disadvantaged and/or Minority Parent
Participation in General Education

From the array of information in this literature review, six broad findings can

be identified that summarize the knowledge base related to parent participation

among culturally and linguistically diverse and economically challenged populations:

1. Different and opposing definitions of parental participation cause

   professionals to misinterpret level of and interest in participation.

2. No matter their race, ethnicity, culture or income, most families have high

   aspirations and concerns for their children's success.

3. Economically disadvantaged parents and/or minority parents are

   concerned for their children but define parent participation differently.

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4. Professionals misinterpreted respect/deference for professionals as indifference for children.

5. Poverty creates barriers as much as or more than culture or language.

6. School administrators and teachers are unaware of or insensitive to the needs of parents with disabilities

The importance in these findings lies with the fact that research has shown that parental participation can have an impact on school achievement, behavior, and completion rates (Ascher, 1988; Chavkin, 1993; Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Floyd, 1998; Kozleski, Engelbrecht, Hess, Swart, Eloff, Oswald, Molina & Jain, 2008; Petersen, 1989). Parents have an important role to play in their child's education and the school should seek to facilitate this role. The rapidly growing number of economically disadvantaged students and parents and/or minority students and parents requires schools and educators to find new ways to improve education. Research indicates that parent participation is key to student success (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Henderson & Berla, 1997); thus, rather than dismissing economically disadvantaged parents and/or minority parents as uninvolved or uncaring, educators must find ways to stimulate parent participation, to understand the ways in which they do participate and to understand their definition of "participation."

Economically Disadvantaged and/or Minority Parent Participation in
Special Education

The limited number of studies of parent participation in the special education

process is surprising given the fact that parent participation has been an important

guiding principle in special education since P.L.94-142 passed 35 years ago. An

analysis of the studies used in this review revealed that researchers have examined (a)

the special education process from different aspects of parents' participation; (b) a

broader range of activities in regards to rather than just the IEP development meeting;

(c) participation of parents at various points throughout the special education process;

(d) defined and examined 'parent participation' both quantitatively and qualitatively;

and (e) conducted research using various types of methodology, i.e. survey,

observations, interviews and questionnaires.

From this review of parent participation in the special education process, three

pictures emerge. First, mothers of children with disabilities provide a significant

amount of what we know about the participation of parents in the special education

process. In most all of the studies reviewed, the sole or primary source of information

was from mothers. (Caines, 1998; Denton, 1983; Goldstein et al., 1980; Gerber, et al,

2006; Harry, 1992; Scanlon et al., 1981; Spann, 2003; Vaughn et al., 1988; Zake &

Wendt, 1991; Zetlin et al., 1996). Second, clearly, some parents participate in the

decision making process for their child to the maximum extent authorized in law,

while other parents have little or no participation. Third, a diversity of parent views

and experiences represent a continuum of their perspectives and desires. This

diversity is related to demographic, logistical and institutional factors. These factors are reviewed in the following sections.

Demographic Factors

There was nothing found in the literature to support the belief of teachers that minority parents' lack of parent participation in the schools was a direct lack of interest in ones children. On the contrary, parents from all backgrounds and abilities who have children in either special education or general education expressed insurmountable interest in their child's education (Gerber, 2006; Harry, 2002; Horner, 1986; Lamorey, 2002; Zetlin et al., 1996). Important demographic factors such as culture, level of education, socio-educational status, and knowledge of the special education process affect economically disadvantaged parents and/or minority parents rather than apathy or disinterest.

Culture. Research highly supports the idea that the amount of parents' participation in the special education process is often influenced by the differences between the cultural norms and values of the school and of parents (Harry, 1992, 2002; Lynch & Stein, 1982; Lynch & Stein, 1987; Tomlinson, 2007; Zetlin et al., 1996). In light of the current diverse ethnic and racial composition of the United Stages, this is an important finding which supports the authors of IDEA 97 who noted that "nearly one of every three [persons] will be either African American, Hispanic, Asian American, or American Indian" by the year 2000 (IDEA 97, p. 6).

Some parents from minority cultures expressed a desire for more personal communication and interactions. Hispanic parents viewed written communication as

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impersonal often coming from the administrators (Harry, 1992, 2002). Most parents interviewed in a study by Lynch and Stein (1987) indicated they would rather small group meetings or one-on-one interaction with school personnel, thus promoting parent participation.

It was also found that cultural norms influence minority parents' expectations and their participation in the special education process (Harry, 1992, 2002; Jeynes, 2005; Lynch & Stein, 1987; Lynch & Stein, 1982; Zetlin et al., 1992). That is, Zetlin et al. (1992) pointed out that active and assertive parent participation and comfort with questioning authority were not necessarily typical of the kinds of behavior patterns found among minority parents. In fact, U.S. schools operate on the Western cultural values of efficiency, independence and equity, which are in direct conflict with those of many minority families (Chiang, 2007; Lamorey, 2002; Sileo, Sileo & Prates, 1996). Some minority cultures perceive the professional to be "above" the family and that teachers are the experts. Therefore, they assume a more passive role and are recipients of information (Chiang, L., & Hadadian, A., 2007; Fish, 2008; Lusthaus et al., 1981). Lynch and Stein reported that "Hispanic and African American parents offered fewer suggestions at special education meetings and knew significantly less about their child's special services than did White parents" (Kohl, 2000, p. 503-504; Lynch & Stein, 1987). Culturally diverse parents not only must deal with the complexities of the special education process, they must do so through the additional barrier of competing cultures.

Several cultural norms appear to be common among Hispanics. Two of these cultural norms, "familism" and "simpatia" are highlighted. "Familism" refers to an obligation to provide support to the members of the extended family, relying on extended family members for help and support and an emphasis on interdependency (Hughes, Valle-Riestra, & Arguelles, 2008; Marin & Marin, 1991). For example, in order for the successful treatment of a child with ADHD, the cultural value of familism has many important implications. First, Hispanic families provide the necessary support for their child and protect him or her from the development of conduct problems (Bauermeister et al., 2005). Second, it is essential to include extended family members as their opinions are given considerable weight and to include them in activities designed to educate parents and caregivers about ADHD. Therefore, cultural values and parenting practices of Hispanic families need to be recognized by service providers and their parent and family training programs (Chrispeels, & Rivero, 2001; Forehand & Kotchick, 1996).

The second Hispanic cultural value, "simpatía," refers to the importance of promoting smooth and pleasant social relationships in order to avoid interpersonal conflict (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Marin & Marin, 1991; Zea et al., 1994). When "simpatia" is predominant, Hispanic parents will agree with educators on recommendations for treatment for their child's ADHD, but might not follow through with those recommendations at home. In addition, school personnel who emphasize courtesy, warmth and respect in their interactions with Hispanic parents will in turn

have Hispanic parents will be more willing to talk about their concerns (Chrispeels &

Rivero, 2001; Zea et al., 1994).

Researchers agree that there are diverse ways in which disabilities are

conceptualized due to the heterogeneity of Asian languages (Chiang, 2007;

Tomlinson, 2007 & Chan, 1986). In a study by Tomlinson (2007), it was found that

an Asian American family may view disability as a) a source of damage to the

family's pride; b) a punishment for past wrongs; or c) if their child has severe

disabilities, not seek help from professionals because of social stigma and family

shame. On the other hand, Asian American parents may attribute difficulties in

academics or behavior to the child being stubborn or to the parents' own mistakes in

child rearing rather than their child having a mild disability.

Although federal regulations clearly state that in order to insure a fair

assessment of ability and achievement, a student must be assessed in their native

language. However, there are no assurances of a cultural match. In a study done by

the Zetlin et al. (1996), a parent expressed her concern that although her child's

assessment was conducted in the child's native language, she felt the evaluator, who

was from a different culture than the child, did not understand the child's responses.

Therefore, it was believed that the child's most recent change in their educational

label was due, in part, to a lack of understanding on the part of the evaluator of the

child's culture and the meaning of the child's responses. In the Spann (2003) study, a

Hispanic child was evaluated by someone who was Asian American and whose

second language was Spanish. It was thought that because this person spoke Spanish,

an interpreter was not necessary during the evaluation and thus the child did not receive a fair assessment.

Education Level. Horner (1986) and Gerber et al. (2006) found that a parents' comfort level in participating in the special education process was often influenced by their level of education. Given the complexity of the special education process along with its forms, procedures, regulations and specialized language, it is not surprising that parents with less education may find the process difficult to understand and to participate in it meaningfully.

Socioeconomic Status. Several research studies support the fact that socioeconomic status (SES) is not a factor in parents' desire to participate in special education (Horner, 1986; Kozlezki, et al, 2008) or general education processes (Jeynes, 2005; Chavkin & Williams, 1989). However, the Zake and Wendt (1991) study connects SES with parent understanding of special education proceedings. In their study of parental understanding of assessment information, they reported that high SES parents were significantly better at recalling and understanding information presented than low SES parents and poor understanding. Understanding the difference between high and low SES parents is a result of the latter group's likely lower level of formal education rather than their SES.

Knowledge of Special Education Process. Most often, parents' inability to understand and participate in the special education process was found to be due to the lack of knowledge of the special education process (Harry, 2002; O'Brien, 1987; Zetlin, Padron & Wilson, 1996). More important, parents do not realize the

significance of the terms used during IEP meetings. These terms represent specific events and activities that were established procedures in the special education process (Harry, 1992, 2002). Parents and special educators most often suggested providing information about the process and parents' rights as a way to improve and enhance their participation in the special education process (Denton, 1983; Fish, 2008; Lushes et al., 1981; Lynch & Stein, 1987; Rock, 2000).

Researchers found that there was a significant positive relationship between information level and parent involvement (Fish, 2008; Gerber, et al 2006; Spann 2003). In a 1992 study by Katsiyannis and Ward, parents cited the greatest problem they experienced while navigating the special education process was schools explaining parents' rights. Even though schools are naturally the logical primary provider of information to parents about the special education process, parents report that they do not have enough knowledge of the process to effectively participate.

Logistical Factors

Scheduling difficulties, transportation and childcare issues were logistical issues that influence parent's ability to attend meetings and participate in the special education process. Lynch and Stein (1987) interviewed Hispanic parents as well as African American and Caucasian parents regarding their participation in the development of the IEP and opportunities to participate in their child's educational program. It was discovered that time conflicts associated with "work" was found across all ethnic and income groups and was one of the main reasons parents cited for not attending IEP meetings.

Weiss, et al (2003) found that parents of children with learning disabilities stated that their own employment and home situation were two barriers prohibiting them from participating in their child's education. Since most special education meetings occur during the day that most parents are at work, these findings are not surprising.

Time conflict was also cited by parents as a factor in the ability to participate (Fish, 2008; Lynch & Stein, 1987, Spann, 2003). For example, in a study by Katsiyannis and Ward (1992), 20% of the 10,662 parents surveyed stated they did not attend their child's IEP meetings because they did not receive notification of the meeting in time to make the necessary arrangements.

Transportation. Another factor in parents' participation in the special education is transportation. The Lynch & Stein (1987) and Gerber et al (2006) studies found that a lack of transportation often limited their participation in meetings. However, a lack of transportation as a barrier was often cited by parents who either did not own a car, or relied on friends or public transportation.

Child Care. Child care is also mentioned as a logistical factor that interferes with participation in the special education process (Jeynes, 2005; Lynch & Stein, 1987); Spann, 2006). However, in all three of these studies, Hispanic parents were the only parents who stated that 'providing child care' would promote their increased participation.

Institutional Factors

The special education process is based on the principle that participation and input from all, including parents, is important. It is prescribed in federal law and administrative regulations specify procedures that presuppose collaboration and reciprocity. However, if schools and their professionals:

> view compliance with the law as an end in itself, its implementation
> will inevitably be in the mode of confinement, since the law exists
> only as an abstraction – a set of principles whose actualization can
> only be documented by measures such as deadlines, statistics, and in
> the case of parents, signed consent forms. Professionals who view the
> law as a vehicle for the assurance of equity, however, will devise
> strategies for including rather than excluding parents, for sharing
> rather than appropriating power…they will demonstrate the …posture
> of reciprocity. (Harry, 1992, p. 208)

In assuming the posture of reciprocity, the principle of participation and input from all will become a part of professional educator's value system, shape their attitudes and guide their actions. However, some parents believe that school personnel do not embrace the same spirit of collaboration and reciprocity that the law envisions. These parents feel that particular school-related factors, such as educators' willingness to work collaboratively and reciprocally, their communication methods, and the manner in which school personal implement federal and state regulations, impact their participation in the special education process (Parette & Petch-Hogan, 2000; Tutwiler, 2005; Ysseldyke et al., 1982).

School Personnel Attitude. Leadership is a critical factor associated with effective schools.(Algozzine, Ysseldyke, & Campbell, 1994; Fish, 2008; Monteith, 1994) and, as education has moved beyond traditional boundaries to serve ever more

diverse student populations, the principal's role has become more complex,

demanding and momentous (Billingsley, Farley, & Rude, 1993; Fish, 2008; Davis,

1980). In this regard, the attitude and behavior of the building principal are critical

elements in creating a school climate or professional culture that engenders

participation of culturally, linguistically and economically diverse parents. Moreover,

a principal's attitude and behavior toward special education and the children it serves

and their parents have a direct impact on the success of special education programs

because they influence how well those programs are accepted and implemented by

the rest of the professionals in the school (Algozzine et al., 1994; Burrello et al.,

1992; Fish, 2008; Gameros, 1995; Van Horn et al., 1992). The role of principals in

schools today is one based on acceptance of diversity in the student population and

accepting those programs that meet the individual needs of the students. Principals

are instrumental in providing quality services to all children in their respective

schools. Through their actions and attitudes, principals are a critical component to the

success or failure of the special education program in their building. It is their

personal knowledge of special education issues that is a key predicator of a program's

success (Lasky & Karge, 2006). Goor et al. (1997) defined effective leaders as those

principals who believe that all children can learn and accept all children as part of the

school community.

Epstein and Sheldon (2002) found that when there are cultural and socio-

economic differences between teachers and parents, teachers are more likely to

believe that those parents are disinterested and uninvolved in education. O'Brien

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(1987) and Spann (2003 also found that parents identified "perceived attitude of school personnel" as the most significant factor contributing to their involvement in and satisfaction with the IEP process. Harry (1992, 2002) points out that in order to promote parent participation in the special education process, there must be a "tone of absolute support for the student" and an "atmosphere of respect for the parent".

Communication. Research findings suggest that parents want greater participation in their child's special education process (Horner, 1986; O'Brien, 1987). Therefore, parents have the need to understand the proceedings and forms used in the process. In additional studies by Denton (1983) and Gerber (2006), parents were asked to give specific recommendations for improving their child's IEP meeting. Overwhelmingly, parent's recommended improved communication. They asked to receive important information prior to the meeting, in addition to more information shared during IEP meetings. They specifically stated that there be not educational jargon used by the professionals during the meetings.

Both researchers and parents acknowledge that parents do not understand educational jargon and its use negatively affects parent's participation and satisfaction with the special education process (Zetlin, Padron & Wilson, 1996, Gerber, et al 2006). Parents' difficulty understanding the use of jargon and the special education process itself is extensive in both oral and written communication (Denton, 1983; Gerber, 2006; Goldstein et al., 1980; Harry, 1992; Ysseldyke et al., 1982). Even when schools attempt to make all written communication understandable, i.e. letters and forms used to inform parents of upcoming meetings, outcomes of meetings and

requests for parental consent, parents still report difficulty in interpreting the communication. Front and foremost, written documentation also includes the "pinnacle" document of the special education process, the IEP itself.

In addition, Denton (1983) reported that more than half of the participants in her study found that upon attending their child's IEP meetings, they were not what they had expected. For example, one parent reported that arriving for the meeting, she was surprised to find the focus was to review assessment results rather than plan which ones would be done. In another study, parents reported that even though they received a written copy of procedural safeguards, they did not know their rights which were available to them in particular situations (Katsiyannis, 1992). Clearly, these examples illustrate that when schools' try to meet their obligations by providing written communication, there is not a guarantee of parental understanding or meaningful participation.

Many parents find the quantity of written communication to be daunting. According to Harry (1992), Hispanic parents of children with disabilities found the large amount of letters and paperwork they receive during the special education process quite a challenge to acknowledge. On the contrary, other research findings suggest that not only do parents not consistently receive written communication regarding meetings, they do not receive written documents such as the IEP itself (Harry, 1992; Gerber et al, 2006; Katsiyannis & Ward, 1992).

Parents report that both school personnel-parent communication, in meetings and outside of meetings, is a factor in their participation in the special education

process (Caines, 1998; Denton, 1983; Gerber et al, 2006; Goldstein, Strickland, Turnbull, & Curry, 1980; Harry, 1992; Lee, 2005; Lynch & Stein, 1987; Mehan, Hertweck, & Meihls, 1986; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Mitchell, 1982; Spann, 2003; Zetlin, Padron, & Wilson, 1996). There are rarely discussions of future contacts between school personnel and parents during the IEP meetings (Gerber, et al 2006).

Scheduling. Parents have identified issues related to scheduling as barriers to their participation in meetings (Lynch & Stein, 1987). Often meetings are scheduled without regard to parent preferences for scheduling or their ability to attend a meeting. At best, this is an insincere attempt to include and involve parents in the special education process. This type of behavior reflects schools' poor practices. Such behavior may meet the letter of the law, but not the spirit of the law

Not surprisingly, parents consistently report that their participation is negatively affected when meetings are set up back to back with other meetings, scheduled with short notice at inconvenient times, and allow insufficient time for discussion (Goldstein et al., 1980; Katsiyannis & Ward, 1992; Lusthaus et al., 1981; Lynch & Stein, 1982, Spann, 2003). Schools demonstrate a lack of value for parent participation when notifying parents of meetings without a genuine attempt to assure and maximize the full involvement. Thus it seems that schools have institutionalized the federal mandate of parental participation merely as an obligation.

Summary of Findings on Economically Disadvantaged and/or Minority Parent
Participation in Special Education

The literature reviewed above includes studies from 1978 to the present that addressed participation of economically disadvantage parents, minority parents and non-minority parents in their child's special education process. Although there is a paucity of such research, some general conclusions can be drawn from the available research.

1. Most of what is known about economically disadvantaged parents and minority parents' perceptions of the special education process comes from mothers;

2. For the last three decades, economically disadvantaged parents and minority parents have been generally passive participants in the special education process;

3. "Parent apathy" is a misconception; rather than apathy, economically disadvantaged parents and minority parents' lack of meaningful participation can be attributed to variety of demographic, logistic, and institutional reasons;

4. Though generally satisfied with the special education process, economically disadvantaged parents and minority parents would like to be in more of an active role;

5. Culturally, linguistically and economically diverse parents limited knowledge of their rights and the special education negatively influences their ability to understand the special education process and participate in

it meaningfully on behalf of their children, as well as to make fully

informed judgments about its effectiveness;

6. Poor professional communication practices, including use of special

   education jargon, negatively influences culturally, linguistically and

   economically disadvantaged parents understanding of and participation in

   the special education process;

7. Although school personnel can follow special education procedures, and

   be in compliance with federal and state law, their actions most often

   discourage parent participation; and

8. Principals are the key to providing quality services to all children in their

   respective schools.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Naturalistic inquiry is "the method and techniques of observing, documenting, and interpreting attributes, patterns, characteristics, and meanings of specific contextual or gestaltic features under study" (Leininger, 1985, p.5). The aim of this type of qualitative research is to observe, document, analyze, and interpret multiple constructions of social phenomena in particular social contexts, from the points of view of the participants in those contexts. As such, naturalistic inquiry is the preferred mode of inquiry for studying multiple interpretations of social events and processes in particular social contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Reinharz, 1979). Natural contexts—including their material, social, political, cultural, and historical aspects—provide the data for analysis and interpretation (Leininger, 1985).

The purpose of the present study was to understand the nature and effects of poor and/or minority parents' participation in the IEP process of their children with disabilities in urban schools. Given the substantive problem of inadequate parental involvement in the process and the aim of explaining this by understanding the process from the multiple perspectives of its participants, naturalistic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Skrtic, 1985; Skrtic, Guba & Knowlton, 1985) or constructivist (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) inquiry was selected as the methodology for this study because it provides the best fit among problem, method, and purpose.

Design and Implementation

The design and implementation of a naturalistic or constructivist inquiry is based on the ontological, epistemological, and methodological presuppositions of the interpretivist paradigm of modern social science. These presuppositions are that (a) there are multiple constructed social realities that only can be studied holistically; (b) the inquirer and the object of inquiry interact to influence one another; (c) the aim of inquiry is to develop an idiographic body of knowledge that describes the individual case; (d) all social entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping so that it is often impossible to distinguish causes from effects; and (e) inquiry is value-bound by inquirer values (especially relative to choice of paradigm and substantive theory), contextual values, and the congruence or non-congruence between inquirer and contextual values (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Because the intent of constructivist research is to permit the social constructions of participants to emerge, the design of such studies unfolds over time as the inquiry progresses (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Reinharz, 1979; Stern, 1985). That is, because they are concerned with the interpretations or "local theory" of participants rather than *a priori* theory (Guba and Lincoln, 1982), naturalistic inquirers initially approach a research topic inductively with the posture of not knowing what is not known, and subsequently become more deductive once they learn from participants what needs to be known. As such, their inquiries typically go through progressively more deductive phases in order to learn what needs to be studied and, then, to study it.

The design of the present study followed the three phases of naturalistic inquiry specified by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which they refer to as Phase I, Orientation and Overview; Phase II, Focused Exploration; and Phase III, Member Check. In the Phase I, the inquirer attempts to learn what is salient to the participants, then in the Phase II she learns as much as possible about these saliencies and synthesizes this information in a case study report. In Phase III, the inquirer checks the credibility of the case study report with research participants and knowledgeable others (see below).

<center>Sampling</center>

The goal of sampling in this study was to achieve maximum information about the nature and effects of poor and/or minority parents' participation in the special education process. In order to achieve this goal, Patton's (1980) six purposive sampling procedures were used, individually and collectively, to select the research site and research participants. The sampling techniques included: (a) extreme cases, (b) typical cases, (c) political cases, (d) critical cases, (e) convenience sampling, and (f) maximum variation sampling. These techniques were operationalized alone and in combination through "serial nomination." This process involved soliciting participants and other knowledgeable individuals, groups, and agencies to recommend or nominate other participants, documents, and observation opportunities that represented, for example, typical or critical cases and thereby could provide new and/or confirmatory information of interest (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Skrtic 1985) (see below).

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Site Selection

Three large urban school districts located in the middle of the United States were selected as research sites for both convenience and typical case purposes. Regarding District A, the 2006-2007 Demographic Profile of the District, noted that it is comprised of 49 schools, including three preschools, 30 elementary schools (grades K-5), eight middle schools (grades 6-8), four senior high schools (grades 9-12), a college prep school (grades 8-12), an alternative school program, and an area technical school. It is the third largest school district in the state, enrolling approximately 20,000 students representing 20 different languages. Eighty-three percent of the students are minorities, 76.5 percent live below the poverty line and 13% are students with disabilities.

The 2006-2007 Demographic Profile of District B, noted that it is comprised of 57 elementary schools (PreK – 5), 17 middle schools (6-8), 11 high schools (9-12), two early childhood schools and seven special education schools. It is the largest district enrolling approximately 48,000 students. Fifty-six percent of the students are minorities, 65.6 percent live below the poverty line and 14% are students with disabilities. .

The 2006-2007 Demographic Profile of District C, noted that it is comprised of 21 elementary schools (PreK – 5), six middle schools (6-8), four traditional high schools and one charter high school (9-12), four additional schools to reach students outside mainstream K-12 and an area vocational school. This district has an enrollment of approximately 13,000 students. Fifty-four percent of the students are

minorities, 65.6 percent live below the poverty line and 16% are students with disabilities.

Sampling Participants

Economically disadvantaged and/or racial, ethnic and linguistic minority parents of children with disabilities who were presently attending or had attended school in these three large districts in the middle of the United States served as the initial parent sampling pool for the study. The initial set of research participants was recommended by a parent resource center from among parents who had availed themselves of center services. Although the target population was economically disadvantaged and/or racial, ethnic and linguistic minority parents of children with disabilities, some White middle class families were sampled for the purpose of "maximum variation" (see below).

The parent resource center is a statewide non-profit organization assisting parents with sons and/or daughters who have any form of disability. It was originally founded by a special education professor, as an opportunity for families to come together and meet other families who where navigating the special education and disability services system. The center has since become a highly effective parent training and information center. In order to identify initial participants for phase 1 interviews, the inquirer interviewed the directors and staff of all three sites. Certain elite interviewees (e.g. executive director, center coordinators, and parent to parent coordinators) were selected for their unique access to information on the nature, history, and implementation of district special education policies and procedures

Each staff member subsequently contacted parents who were economically disadvantaged or members of a racial, ethnic or linguistic minority group, as well as White middle class parents, as noted above, briefly explained the study, and sought permission for the inquirer to contact them with more information and a request to participate. Inquirer contact with interested parents was made by telephone and, after information was shared about the study, what it required of participants, and informed consent and confidentiality, a meeting time and place was arranged for an interview (see informed consent below). The initial parent participants were selected to reflect hypothesized variation across the dimensions of race, ethnicity, SES/class, student disability type, student age/grade level, family structure (single parent, two-parent, etc.), and positive vs. negative participation experiences. The technique of "serial nomination" noted above was employed to identify subsequent interviewees and observation opportunities.

Twenty-two parents from 14 families participated in this study. Of the 14 families, there were seven Caucasian, two African American, one Asian American, two Hispanic, and two biracial families (see Table 1). Nine of the participants were married couples, four of the participants were single family mothers, and one was a single grandmother who had custody rights of her grandchildren. All of the families, of course, had at least one child with a disability; however, there were three families who had two children with disabilities and one family who had three children with disabilities.

Three of the children had been identified at birth with a disability, while 16 were identified either by three years of age or during elementary school. Five of the children were identified with autism, eight children were identified with learning disabilities, two children with emotional disturbance, and two children were identified with multiple disabilities, one child with mental retardation, and one child with other health impairments.

There were 10 families participating in the free or reduced lunch programs. Employment varied from the unemployed, to office worker, to postal worker, to active duty reservist, professor, and engineer. Eight of the mothers worked outside of the home. Socioeconomic status varied from poor, working poor and working class, to middle class and upper income. (See below)

Table 1

Table of Interviewees: Parent Participants in Study

Parent	Race/Ethnicity	SES	Family Structure	Parent Ed. Level	Disability/Age/Grade
Amy/Allen	White/White	High	2 parents/2 children	M: College F: College	Autism 5yr old son Kindergarten
Betty	White	Low	Single mother/with disability 1 child 2 grandchildren	M: Some College	ADD/Bipolar 16yr old son GED
Claire	White	Mid	Custodial Grandmother/with Disability 2 grandchildren	GM: Business School	Dyslexia 16yr old grandson 11th grade Dyslexia, Severe Disabilities 12yr old grandson 6th grade
Diane/Dave	White/White	Mid	2 parents/3 children	M: College F: College	Dyslexia 16yr old son 11th grade Dyslexia 14yr old son 8th grade Dyslexia 12yr old son 6th grade

Table 1 (cont.)

Table of Interviewees: Parent Participants in Study

Parent	Race/Ethnicity	SES	Family Structure	Parent Ed. Level	Disability/Age/Grade
Ellen/Ed	Asian/White	High	2 parents/3 children	M: College F: College	Downs Syndrome 12yr old son 7th grade
Fay/Frank	White/White	Low	2 parents/2 children Mother with disability	M: HS F: College	Severe Disabilities 6yr old daughter 1st grade Speech 5yr old daughter Kindergarten
Gail	Hispanic	Mid	2 parents/2 children	M: College F: College	Autism 12yr old daughter 6th grade
Hanna/Hank	White/Black	Mid	2 parents/ 3 children	M: HS F: HS	Learning Disabilities/ADHD 7yr old son 2nd grade
Inez	White	Mid	Single mother/2 children	M: College	LD/Gifted/ADHD 17yr old son 12th grade LD/Gifted/ADHD 12yr old son 6th grade
Jacinta	Hispanic	High	2 parents/2 children	M: HS F: College	Autism 22yr old HS Graduate
Kay	White	Low	2 parents/3 children	M: Some College F: Trade School	Bipolar/Conduct Disorder 9yr old daughter 4th grade
Linda	Black	Mid	2 parents/2 children	M: Trade School F: HS	Autism/ADHD/OCD 8yr old daughter 3rd grade
Mary	Black	Low	Single parent/8 children	M: HS	Autism 12yr old daughter 7th grade
Norma	Asian	High	2 parents/2 children	M: College F: College	Chromosomal 5yr old daughter Preschool

Eight parent advocates, six White and two Black, employed by the parent resource center, were interviewed for the study. Five of them have a child with a disability and were initially involved in PAC as parents themselves. There is a total of 74 years of service among the advocates; ranging from 6 months to 19 years of

commitment to parent advocacy. Parent advocates were interviewed to identify

parent participants and to provide substantive information about their experiences as

parents of children with disabilities and/or parent participation generally from their

perspective as parent advocates working in their respective school districts. In

addition, parent advocates served a triangulation function relative to the credibility of

parent interview data. (See below).

Table 2:

Table of Interviewees: Parent Advocate Participants in Study

Parent	Race/Ethnicity	Position	# of yrs as advocate	Family Structure	Disability/Age/Grade
Paula	White	Executive Director	12	2 parents/5 children	SD 16yr old daughter 12th grade
Rachel	White	Center Coordinator	10	2 parents/3 children	Autism 16yr old son 11th grade
Sue	White	Parent to Parent Coordinator	13	2 parents/2 children	SD/Blind 17yr old daughter 12th grade
Tanya	White	Center Coordinator	19	2 parents/3 children	
Vicky	White	Family/School Community	12	2 parents/4children	
Wanda	White	Center Coordinator	7	2 parents/2 children	Autism 15yr old son 9th grade
Yvette	Black	Parent to Parent Coordinator	8	Single parent/5 children	Traumatic Brain Injury 12yr old son (Deceased)
Zelda	Black	Parent to Parent Coordinator	6 mos.	2 parents/3 children	ADHD/Speech 12yr old son 7th grade ADHD/Speech 12yr old son 7th grade

Informed Consent

Informed consent for all participants was obtained at the start of each interview or observation using an informed consent statement approved by the University of Kansas Human Subjects Committee (HSC) (see Appendix A). Once presented with the approved informed consent statement, the participants were given the opportunity to read the statement and raise questions or concerns regarding the purpose or nature of the study. The participants were asked to indicate their consent in the research by signing the consent form. To protect anonymity all participants and agencies were given pseudonyms.

Instrumentation

In naturalistic research, the inquirer serves as a human instrument for data collection. Mechanical and material devices such as tape-recorders, computers and field notebooks were used in the present study, but these simply served as tools used by the inquirer for efficient and reliable documentation during the data collection process. An inquiry about the experiences of poor and/or minority parents of children with disabilities in urban public schools required that the inquirer possess certain knowledge, skills, dispositions, and experiences related to the subject under study and the research methodology utilized (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The inquirer's knowledge, skills, dispositions and experiences related to the subject under study were derived primarily from (a) 17 years of urban public school teaching that included poor and/or minority students with disabilities schools; (b) 5 years experience as a KSDE-trained School Improvement Team member; and (c) 4

years of doctoral study in the Department of Special Education at the University of

Kansas.

In addition, as part of her doctoral studies, the inquirer completed a graduate

course in naturalistic inquiry taught by Professor Tom Skrtic, during which she

studied a number of qualitative texts, including *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Lincoln & Guba,

1985) Also, under the direct supervision of Professor Skrtic, the inquirer conducted a

naturalistic research project on the topic of participation of poor and/or minority

parents of children with disabilities in the IEP process in urban public schools.

During this naturalistic study, the inquirer participated in the data collection process,

writing the final case study report, and conducting a member check to test the

credibility of the case study report with research participants. This academic training

and practical experience with the research methodology helped the inquirer develop

the necessary value disposition and research skills for conducting naturalistic research

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Collection and Recording

According to Dexter (1970), an interview is a conversation with a purpose. As

Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted, in a naturalistic or constructivist inquiry the purposes

of interviews include:

> Obtaining here-and-now constructions of persons, events, activities,
> organizations, feelings, motivations, claims, concerns, and other
> entities; reconstructions of such entities as experienced in the past;
> projections of such entities as they are expected to be experienced in
> the future; verification, emendation, and extension of information
> obtained from other sources, human and nonhuman (triangulation);

and verification, emendation, and extension of constructions
developed by the inquirer (member checking). (p. 268)

Interviews can be structured or unstructured. In structured interviews, the

problem is framed and defined by the researcher and the participant largely is

expected to answer in terms of the interviewer's framework and definition of the

problem. In unstructured interviews, however, the format is non-standardized and the

interviewer is concerned primarily with the participant's framework, definition, and

account of what is relevant. In this study, initial Phase I interviews were more

structured than is typically the case in naturalistic research (see Lincoln & Guba,

1985), given availability of a considerable amount of empirical research on the topic.

Therefore, initial interview protocols for parent advocates and parents were

developed from the empirical literature, following the procedures of Yin's (2003)

case study method (see Appendix B). Nonetheless, in conducting the initial

interviews with parent advocates and parents the researcher allowed issues and

perspectives to emerge from the participants as they responded to her questions and

elaborated on their responses. As in all naturalistic inquiries, in subsequent

interviews the inquirer used an increasingly structured interview format, thus

allowing the study to become more focused over time on the perspectives and

experiences of the participants. In all cases, the interviews were concerned to

understand the unique, idiosyncratic, wholly individual or "native" viewpoint of the

participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

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This study adhered to Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended steps to guide the interview process. These include:

1. Using purposive sampling to select interviewees.

2. Preparing for the interview by knowing as much about the participant as possible.

3. Setting the tone of the interview by asking "grand tour" questions (Spradley, 1979) that relax and "warm up" the participant.

4. Pacing and keeping the interview productive by focusing on salient points, probing for details, and eliciting elaborations and illustrations of concepts.

5. Terminating the interview when it ceases to be productive, reviewing notes with the participant to clarify understanding and set the stage for possible follow-up sessions.

In addition to the nature of the research itself (i.e., its focus on understanding the phenomena of interest from participants' perspectives), rapport between the researcher and research participants was facilitated by adoption of a "depth interviewing" posture in which the interviewer takes the role of an empathetic but less knowing peer.

Observations

Two types of observations were employed in the present study. First, the inquirer observed participants' nonverbal behavior (i.e., gestures, facial expressions,

and body language) in all interviews, and used this information during data analysis to supplement the verbal content of interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As with interviews, unstructured observations are inductive and thus concerned with recording any and all behavior, communication, relationships, and organizational processes that are apparent in the observation setting. Structured observations are deductive. They are concerned with recording pre-specified behaviors and processes that expand upon and/or triangulate previously collected interview and/or observation data and analytic categories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Skrtic 1985).

The second type of observation was the use of unobtrusive measures. Throughout the study, the inquirer observed and recorded information inferred from material such as items on an individual's desk or pictures on the wall in a home or office. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 279) described such materials as unobtrusive measures, that is, "information that accumulates without intent on the part of either the investigator or the respondents to whom the information applies." The value of unobtrusive measures is that they have face validity and are non-disruptive and nonreactive. The problem with them, however, is that they are heavily inferential and thus present difficulties relative to establishing their trustworthiness. Nevertheless, information from unobtrusive measures was collected as it was encountered, and its utility was determined later during data analysis, case reporting, and during final member checks. As recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985), such information was used primarily as a potential source of triangulation for data collected through

interviews and observations, as well as to provide "thick description" in the case study report.

In this study, the inquirer observed in the participants homes or office area were the interviews took place. However, during Phase II of the study, the inquirer was observing to triangulate and expand upon the saliencies participants were reporting in interviews.

Documents and Records

A record is "any written or recorded statement prepared by or for an individual or organization for the purpose of attesting to an event or providing an accounting" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.277), which would include, for example, a student's official IEP. Documents are "any written or recorded material other than a record that was not prepared specifically in response to a request from the inquirer" (p.277), which in the present study included virtually all documents that specified the district policies and procedures relative to the IEP process and parent participation in it. The inquirer also requested copies or assistance in gaining access to all documents and records referred to by participants in interviews.

Recording Modes

Data collected through interviews and observations were recorded using handwritten notes and tape recordings of interviews. The tape recordings were transcribed and subsequently edited for typographical errors and exclusions. In addition, the inquirer maintained four reflexive journals throughout the study. One

reflexive journal was used during all elite interviews to describe participants'

nonverbal behavior (i.e. facial expressions, gestures, and body language) and used to

supplement the verbal content of interviews during data analysis (Lincoln & Guba,

1985). A second reflexive journal was kept for recording the inquirer's personal

insights, feelings and reactions relative to what she will be learning from the research,

and, given this, what lines of inquiry she will judge to be added or expanded and thus

what additional information should be sought.

The inquirer also kept a log of each day's research activities in which she

records the date, time, and location of each interview and observation conducted and

every document and record that was collected. This log included a listing of potential

interviews, observations and documents and records to be conducted or collected in

the future. Finally, the inquirer kept a methodological log in which she (a)

documented the methodological procedures used, (b) recorded and justified the

methodological choices made, (c) characterized the logic of the decision making

process that guided her methodological decisions, and (d) described the resulting

emergent design of the inquiry.

<center>Data Analysis</center>

In constructivist research, data analysis is an ongoing process in which data

collection and data analysis are integrated, reciprocal activities rather than discrete,

isolated events (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Skrtic, 1985). The inquirer used this

continuous, reciprocal process of data collection and analysis within and across the

phases of inquiry, thereby allowing questions, issues, and categories of information to

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become progressively more focused as she learned more about the research problem from the multiple perspectives of the participants. The data collected in observations and interviews were recorded in narrative transcripts. Throughout the inquiry, these transcripts and the supporting information recorded in reflexive journals and documents and records were content analyzed to guide subsequent data collection and analysis and, ultimately, to write the case report (see below).

The content analysis procedure used to analyze this narrative data was a modified version of Glaser and Strauss's (1967) "constant comparative" method proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The modified procedure involved four operations: utilizing, categorizing, filling in patterns, and case study construction (Skrtic, 1985; Skrtic et al., 1985).

Unitizing

Unitizing is a process in which interview, observation, and documentary data are divided into "units" of information related to specific aspects of the problem under study (see Appendix C). The units in the present study reflected perspectives, communications, actions, relationships, and processes relevant to various aspect of the nature and effects of economically disadvantaged and/or minority parents' participation in the IEP process of their children with disabilities in urban public schools. Each unit is the smallest piece of information that could be understood by someone with general knowledge of the topics under study but not necessarily of participants' experiences. Each unit was coded with respect to how it was collected

and the coded name and type of participant who provided it, as well as with the

transcript and transcript page number from which it was drawn (see Appendix D).

Categorizing

Categorizing is the process of sorting units of information into sets of like

information, which in the present study was done using the modified constant

comparison method noted above. The unitizing and categorizing processes began

during Phase I of the present inquiry (see below), with data gathered in interviews,

observations, and documents and records collected prior to the start of the study and

identified during interviews. The unitizing/categorizing analytic procedure was the

mechanism that permitted the inquirer to identify what was salient to participants

relevant to their involvement in the IEP process and to alert her to the additional types

and sources of data that were needed to understand these saliencies more fully,

ultimately making data collection and analysis, and thus the research itself,

progressively more focused over time.

Filling in Patterns

The inquirer used three strategies recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985)

to identify additional types and sources of data needed to fill gaps in her

understanding of participants' saliencies. These included (a) "extension" or using

know information as a content guide for other developing interview or observation

questions or as guides in examining documents and records; (b) "bridging" or using

several known but apparently disconnected items as points of reference as a guide for

further study to identify and understand their connection; and (c) surfacing" or speculating on information that should have been found, given the logic of the category system, and then identifying participants, observation settings, or documents and records to establish its existence or nonexistence. By using these strategies, the inquirer was able to continually evaluate what she was learning about the problem under study, identify and fill gaps in her learning, and verify existing information and insights.

Case Study Construction

One outcome of this integrated, reciprocal process of data collection and analysis was the development of a progressively more comprehensive, complete, and integrated category scheme (see Appendix E). The category scheme represented a taxonomy of information for developing and writing the case study report, which itself served both as a mechanism for reporting the data that were collected and an occasion for further analysis and synthesis of data during the writing process (see Skrtic et al., 1985; Skrtic, 1985). In this sense, the writing of the case study report was another step in the data analysis process (Skrtic, 1985).

The inquirer followed the procedural recommendations of Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Skrtic et al. (1985) to develop the case study report. That is, first, she coded and indexed all of the data from interview, observation, documentary, and unobtrusive sources. Second, she developed a preliminary case report outline based on the purpose of the study, the analysis of the data, and her sense of "what the story line [would] be" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 367), given the logic of the category

scheme and its patterns of issues and themes. Finally, the inquirer expedited the

writing process by cross-referencing the indexed material to the provisional outline.

Following Skrtic (1985), the inquirer anticipated that the category scheme and

the provisional outline would change during the writing of the case report, given that

the writing process itself would uncover gaps in information. When gaps in

understanding were discovered during the case writing process, the inquirer collected

additional information through in-person or phone interviews and/or collection and

analysis of additional documents and records.

Phases of Inquiry

As noted above, Lincoln and Guba (1985) characterized naturalistic or

constructivist inquiries as progressing through three basic phases: (a) Phase I,

Orientation and Overview, in which the researcher learns what is salient to

participants; (b) Phase II, Focused Exploration, in which she studies these saliencies

and synthesizes what is learned in a case study report; and (c) Phase III, Member

Check, in which the inquirer assesses the credibility of the case study report with

research participants and non-participants.

Phase I, Orientation and Overview

During the orientation and overview phase of the present study issues were

identified that participants regarded as most salient relative to the IEP participation of

poor and/or minority parents of children with disabilities in urban public schools. The

inquirer identified these issues by interviewing participants in an unstructured

manner, asking open-ended, grand tour questions such as, "Tell me what you think I should know about …," or "What is most important to you regarding …." Subsequently, participants were asked to identify and discuss in depth what they considered to be the important issues and concerns that should be studied with other participants. The data collected and analyzed during Phase I, and the categories of data and themes and issues that emerged from them, were used to development of Phase II protocols. Phase I began in mid August of 2007 and was completed by January of 2008.

Phase II, Focused Exploration

During the focused exploration phase of the study the inquirer explored in depth the salient issues identified by Phase I participants. Purposive sampling was extended to include additional participants to interview, including but not limited to those who were recommended by Phase I participants. The patterns of interest and categories of information that emerged from Phase I data collection and analysis were used in Phase II conduct more structured interviews, observations, and document and record searches. That is, in this phase of the inquiry the researcher became more deductive, focusing increasingly on exploration and verification of issues, themes, and categories of interest that emerged in Phase I, thus developing a more comprehensive understanding of the problem under study. Although she used more structured interview protocols during this phase, the inquirer continued to ask grand tour questions to allow participants to identify additional issues that were not raised in the first phase of research.

During Phase II data analysis, the Phase I data categories were extended, revised, and reorganized to make the resulting category system progressively more complete, comprehensive, and integrated. Finally, at the end of this phase, the inquirer used the data contained in the revised category system to produce a draft case study report, which represented a synthesis of data collected and analyzed during Phases I and II of the inquiry. Phase II of the study, which included the development, writing and rewriting of the case study, lasted from February of 2008 to February of 2009.

Phase III, Member Check

The purpose of the member check phase was to obtain participant and knowledgeable non-participant reviewers' assessments of the credibility and accuracy of the material and interpretations presented in the draft case study report (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The inquirer provided a draft copy of the case study report to a representative group of interviewees two weeks prior to the final member check. As specified by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Skrtic (1985), member check participants were asked to review the draft case study report and indicate their assessment of its overall credibility, as well as to identify inaccuracies in specific parts of the report, including errors of fact, errors of interpretation, and breaches of individual and institutional anonymity (see Appendix F).

Three levels of agreement were considered in decisions about modifying the text of the draft report: "complete consensus" on some judgment, whether positive or negative; "split consensus," in which an individual or small group of individuals

maintains one judgment while another subgroup maintains a different judgment, possibly but not necessarily in conflict; and "majority consensus" with a strong minority dissent" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 377). "Complete consensus" revisions were generally made as given (see below), while those involving "split consensus" or "majority consensus with a strong minority dissent" were addressed by including each competing perspective in the final case report, thus further illustrating the multiple and contested constructions of issues of concern. However, to avoid the possibility of misrepresenting an issue or perspective, the inquirer retained the option of keeping some or all of the original text, as one interpretation among others. Moreover, in all cases, the inquirer retained the original text when she had or could collect sufficient supporting data for it.

Due to this study occurring in three cities within a 200 mile radius, the final member checks consisted of meeting with reviewers in their perspective cities. Information collected from each group was subsequently shared with all groups. There were ten reviewers who participated in the member check. However, three of these reviewers did not attend the actual meetings. They chose to mail their responses to the researcher who subsequently shared the information with other members. Each session lasted for three hours with a half hour provided lunch break. The sessions were held at each PAC center in Finn, Packard and Armstrong.

While the study achieved complete consensus related to overall credibility, the case study was revised to correct factual and interpretive errors, and to insert additional information for clarification. A "revision appendix" was developed that

listed each revision that was made in the case study as a result of the final member

check (see Appendix G). Phase III lasted for three months, from March 2009 through

May 2009.

Trustworthiness

Establishing the substantive and methodological trustworthiness of the

research enterprise is basic concern of all social research, quantitative and qualitative.

The basic concern in both cases is rigor, or the extent to which the truth-value,

applicability, consistency, and neutrality of the research and its results can be

established (Guba, 1981). Trustworthiness criteria and procedures for quantitative

research are well established, of course. But this had not been the case for qualitative

research prior to Guba and Lincoln's specification of parallel criteria and procedures

for maximizing the trustworthiness of naturalistic research (Guba, 1981; Guba &

Lincoln, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Their criteria, as operationalized by Skrtic et

al. (1985), include (a) credibility (an analog to internal validity or truth value in

quantitative research), (b) transferability (an analog to external validity or

applicability), (c) dependability (an analog to reliability or consistency), and (d)

confirmability (an analog to objectivity or neutrality).

Credibility

The credibility of a constructivist inquiry is advanced when the interpretations

and findings of a case study report are found to be credible by research participants

(those who supplied the supporting data) and non-participants (those who know the

context and can attest to the credibility of interpretations and findings, even though they did not supply the supporting data). This inquiry used the four techniques recommended by Guba and Lincoln (1985) and Skrtic (1985) for maximizing the credibility of constructivist research—prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, and member checks.

Prolonged Engagement. As a credibility maximizing technique, prolonged engagement involves investment of sufficient time on site and with participants to learn the culture of the context, to build trust, and to test for misinformation from participant and/or inquirer distortions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this study, the inquirer spent approximately one hour to one and a half hours at each interview.

Persistent Observation. Persistent observation is concerned with identifying and focusing on understanding the saliencies or "pervasive qualities" of the context under investigation from the perspectives of the research participants (Eisner, 1975; Skrtic, 1985). "If prolonged engagement provides scope, persistent observation provides depth" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 304). In the present study, the inquirer focused on the saliencies identified by participants and, in this way, was able to eliminate irrelevant information and lines of inquiry while expanding on those that were most important and relevant to the research participants.

Triangulation. This credibility maximizing technique involves using multiple data sources, perspectives, and methods to verify case report data, interpretations, and assertions. In the case study report of the present inquiry, the inquirer followed the principle that "no single item of information (unless coming from an elite and

unimpeachable source) should ever be given serious consideration unless it can be triangulated" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 283). As such, each case study report assertion, quotation, and interpretation presented was supported by two or more data sources, perspectives, or data collection methods. With regard to supporting data sources and perspectives, parent advocates provided triangulation for key issues identified by parent participants. Following the procedures in Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Skrtic (1985), all such documentation was provided by assigning a superscript number to each quotation, assertion, and interpretation (or set of assertions and interpretations) in a "documented" version of the case study report prepared for the auditor (see below). The superscript numbers referred to a corresponding number in an "audit appendix" attached to the documented report which contained coded information referring the auditor to the multiple, triangulated sources of documentation for the assertion, interpretation, or quotation in question (see Skrtic, 1985) (see Appendix H).

   Member Check. Member checking is the process of continuously testing data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions with participants and other knowledgeable persons (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As recommended by Skrtic (1985), the present study carried out member checks at different levels. First, the inquirer completed an individual member check at the end of each interview by summarizing the information provided by the interviewee and asking her or him to verify its accuracy. Second, as information was gathered through interviews, observations, and documentary analyses, the inquirer verified its accuracy, completeness, and relevance

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in subsequent interviews, observations, and documents. Finally, in the final member check procedure described above, a representative group of interviewees and other knowledgeable persons who had not been interviewed reviewed the draft case study report for accuracy and credibility.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the applicability of research findings in other contexts, which was addressed in the present study by using the two techniques recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985)—purposive sampling and "thick description," which is a technique to help the reader of a case study report assess the degree to which the findings and insights of the report might be transferable to his or her context (Skrtic, 1985). As explained above, the technique of purposive sampling was used throughout the present inquiry to select the research site and participants, thereby maximizing the information that was collected and analyzed relative to the purpose of the inquiry and the salient issues identified by the participants.

Understanding of the nature and effects of poor and/or minority parents' participation in the IEP process is a broad purpose, but the inquirer's goal was to produce an idiographic rather than a nomothetic interpretation. Ultimately, then, the degree to which her findings apply to other contexts depends on the degree of similarity between those receiving contexts and her sending context, which is a question that she could not answer because she can't know the receiving contexts to which others want to apply her findings (see Skrtic, 1985). As such, following Skrtic's and Lincoln and Guba's (1985) recommendations for addressing the

transferability criterion, she provided a thick description of the sending context—a detailed cultural, social, political, and organizational account of it from the participants' perspectives—so others could judge the degree of transferability of the findings between sending and receiving contexts. Thus, the inquirer's goal was to provide enough thick description to give readers a vicarious experience of parent participation in a particular urban community and school system, thus enabling them to make transferability judgments based on their knowledge of their community and school system (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Skrtic, 1985). Such a thick descriptive case report will be developed and presented in Chapter IV.

Dependability and Confirmability

As the analog of reliability (consistency) in quantitative research is, dependability refers to the appropriateness of methods and methodological decisions, including degree of evident inquirer bias and utility of the overall design and implementation strategies. As the analog of objectivity (neutrality) in quantitative research, confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings and assertions presented in the case study report are grounded in supporting data, as well as the utility of the category scheme and logic of inferences that were made (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Skrtic, 1985). The techniques for establishing dependability and confirmability in constructivist research are the dependability audit and confirmability audit, which Lincoln and Guba (1985) equate with fiscal audits of accountants.

The inquirer developed and maintained all of the materials necessary for carrying out a both types of audits, but did not have a dependability audit done by an independent contractor because the chairperson of her dissertation committee, Professor Tom Skrtic, reviewed, critically evaluated, and approved all methodological decisions, which in effect amounted to an ongoing dependability audit conducted throughout the study. She did not have a formal confirmability audit done because her use of multiple member checks provided several opportunities in effect to assess the confirmability of the data presented in the case study report.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction to the Context of the Study

Three urban cities, Finn, Packard and Armstrong, all within a 200 mile radius

of each other in this plains state, were the settings for this research. Although there

are differences in their demographics, all are home to parents of children with

disabilities. This case study report attempts to render the lived experiences of these

parents as participants in the special education of their children from their

perspectives and from the perspectives of their parent advocates. The aim of the

report is to allow the reader to "hear" the voices of these parents and parent advocates

and, in a sense, relive their experiences in and with the special education planning

process.

The Cities and the People

Finn is the largest of the three cities with a current population of about

360,000. Located at the junction of two rivers, it was incorporated as a city in the late

19th century and had a population of about 30,000 by 1900. The early 20th century

saw tremendous growth from industry with the population surpassing 100,000 in the

1920s and 250,000 in the 1950s. People of European ancestry have for long

constituted the great majority of the population. The African American population,

roughly one tenth of the total, constitutes the largest minority group, and there are

small but growing Hispanic and Asian communities.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the racial makeup of the city was 75% Caucasian, 11% African American or Black, 10% Hispanic, 4% Asian, and 1% Native American. Persons of other races make up about 5% of the population and those two or more races about 3%. The median family income in 2000 for a family was $49,247, with an average per capita income for the city of $20,647. About 8.5% of families were living below the poverty line.

Packard is the smallest of the three cities with a current population estimated to be 125,000. It is situated along the Blue River in the central part of Packard County, located in the northeast part of the state. The city was incorporated in the mid 19th century. The population of Packard grew quickly from 759 in 1860 to over 32,000 in 1900. Businesses have come and gone in the past century and the packing plants which once dotted the river have moved on.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the racial makeup of the city is 79% Caucasian, 12% African American, 11% Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 1% Native American. Persons of other races make up about 4% of the population and those who are multiracial about 3%. The median family income in 2000 for was $45,803, with an average per capita income for the city of $19,555. About 8.5% of families were living below the poverty line

The city of Armstrong is around 145,000. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the racial makeup of the city is 56% Caucasian, 30% African American, 17% Hispanic, 1% Native American, and 2% Asian. Persons of other races make up about 9% of the population and those of two or more races about 3%. The median family

income in 2000 was $39,491. The average per capita income for the city was $15,737, with about 13% of families living below the poverty line.

The School and the Students

The Finn School District is comprised of 57 elementary schools (PreK-5), 17 middle schools (grades 6-8), 11 high schools (grades 9-12), two early childhood centers and seven special education schools. In the 2006-07 academic year, student enrollment was approximately 48,000. The racial make-up of the district was 45% Caucasian, 22% African American, 24% Hispanic, 5% Asian, and 4% Other. There has been an increase of 4% in minority students over the last five years and a 6% increase in students who are English Language Learners to a total of 16 %. Approximately 66% of the students were from economically disadvantaged families, which is an increase of 2 % in the last four years. More than 14% of the student body received special education services.

According to district records, the student attendance rate was maintained at 94% for the 2006-07 and 2007-08 academic years. Although the graduation rate has decreased 2% during this period, the dropout rate has been maintained at 4%. The district has been on Title I improvement for the last five years, with a total of nine Title I Schools on improvement.

The district is led by a superintendent and five associate superintendents. It employs 84 certified principals and 68 assistant principals. There are 2,740 certified general education teachers and 515 certified special education teachers. Ninety-three percent of the certified teachers are classified as "Highly Qualified Teachers."

The Packard School District is comprised of 21 elementary schools (PreK-5); six middle schools (grades 6-8), four traditional high schools and one charter high school (grades 9-12), two special education schools and one Head Start school and an area vocational school. According to district 2006-07 data, the district had an enrollment of approximately 13,000 students. The racial make-up of the district was 47% Caucasian, 25% African American, 19% Hispanic, 4% Other and <1% Asian. There has been an increase of 4% in minority student population over the last four years, and a 4% increase in students who are English Language Learners. Approximately 65% of the students were from economically disadvantaged families, creating an increase of 7 % in the last four years. More than 16% of the student body receives special education services.

According to district records, the student attendance rate decreased 4.4% between the 2006-07 and 2007-08 academic years. While graduation rate has increased 4.4% during this time period, the dropout rate has been maintained at 3.5%. The district has been on Title I improvement for the last three years with a total of three Title I Schools on improvement.

The district is led by a superintendent and an associate superintendent. It employs 33 certified principals and 22 assistant principals. There are 872 certified general education teachers and 229 certified special education teachers. Ninety-three percent of the certified teachers are classified as "Highly Qualified Teachers."

The Armstrong School District is comprised of 49 schools, including three preschools, 30 elementary schools (grades K-5), eight middle schools (grades 6-8),

four senior high schools (grades 9-12), a college prep school (grades 8-12), an alternative school program, and an area technical school. According to district 2006-07 data, there was an enrollment of approximately 20,000 students representing 20 different languages. The racial make-up of the district was 17% Caucasian, 45% African American, 34% Hispanic, 3% Asian and < 1% Other. There has been and an 11% increase in students who are English Language Learners. Approximately 77% of the students qualified for free or reduced lunch. More than 13% of the student body received special education services.

According to district records: the student attendance rate increased 1% between 2006-07 and 2007-08 academic years. The graduation rate had decreased 2% during this period as well as a 1% decrease in the dropout rate. The district has been on Title I improvement for the last five years with a total of 13 Title I Schools on improvement.

The district is led by a superintendent and three associate superintendents. It employs 48 certified principals and 36 assistant principals. There are 1,180 certified general education teachers and 244 certified special education teachers. Eighty-four percent of the certified teachers are classified as "Highly Qualified Teachers."

The Special Education Process

The process of developing an IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) has evolved through a combination of legislation, case law, and school district policy. In principle, IEP development is a collaborative effort involving the parents, representatives of the school district and other providers of services, and the student,

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where appropriate. All members function as a team to develop, review, revise and implement the IEP. Beyond establishing a student's present levels of academic and functional performance, the IEP includes measurable annual goals, indicates which special education, related services, and supplementary aids are to be provided for the student, and the extent to which the student will not participate in the general education curriculum.

As members of the IEP team, it is vital that all parents of children with disabilities have a clear understanding of the process and its importance in their children's future. Providing all families of children with disabilities with information about each of these aspects of the IEP and the IEP process itself is essential if parents are to be empowered and student achievement enabled.

Therefore, by law, all parents have the right to full participation in the IEP process. However, research has shown that minority parents and economically disadvantaged parents don't participate fully for a variety of reasons including demographic factors, logistical factors and school related factors.

In terms of demographic factors, for example, research shows that minority and economically disadvantaged parents often come to IEP meetings with little or no knowledge of their rights and what is to happen in the meeting. For some parents, their own personal challenges and disabilities hamper their involvement in and understanding of their child's educational needs. For others, cultural beliefs sometimes can become a barrier to participation in the special education process, in that, for example, certain cultures keep disfavor seeking help for a child with a

disability from outside the family. In these cultures it is the family's responsibility to provide for the child, and thus parents are reluctant to see help from or involvement with the school.

In terms of logistical factors, research shows that minority and economically disadvantaged often lack transportation or only have one car which might not be available during the day in order to come to school. The families might require childcare for their other children in order to attend school meetings. Schools often schedule meetings during school hours convenient to them, but not convenient to the parents, who might not be able leave their jobs in order to attend meetings. Finally, research also shows that when schools share information with parents, it often is not made either clear or concise. For non- English speaking parents, of course, communication becomes even more of an issue. Moreover, school professionals often are from different cultures and have income and educational levels than these parents, which can become a barrier in establishing relationships with them.

<center>The Parent Advocacy Center</center>

In order to reach the increasing population of families whose children have disabilities in this central state, the Parent Advocacy Center (PAC) was founded in 1982 by a special education professor, as an opportunity for families to come together and meet other families who were navigating the special education system. When the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA), more commonly identified as Public Law 94-142 was amended in 1983, the law responded to the difficulty of families navigating the special education process by including a Parent Training and

Information Center (PTIC) in each state. A group of families, who were served by the PAC, applied for and received a grant in 1986, thus making the PAC this state's IDEA-designated PTIC. Subsequent renewals of the PTIC Grant were made in 1989, 1992, 1997, 2002, and most recently in 2007. Over the past 20 years, the Parent Advocacy Center has provided, without fees, direct support to more than 12,000 families.

Staff

The Executive Director is responsible for the management of all four PAC sites in this state. She attends training on a national level and brings the information to the other members of the teams. She is also responsible for teaching management and supervisory skills to all four Center Coordinators.

The Center Coordinators, besides managing the day to day office functions of their respective centers, update and inform their staff on the law so they can give parents the information they need to be advocates for their children. The Center Coordinators receive training on special education law and advocacy by attending local, state and national conferences.

A Parent-to Parent Coordinator at each center is responsible for matching parents with volunteer supporting parents whose children have similar disabilities. Parents are then able to share their child's struggles and victories with another parent who has walked in "similar shoes." The parents who are served by the Parent-to-Parent program discover they are not alone on their journey whether it's sharing resources and strategies, learning about a new diagnosis or providing moral support

for each other. The PAC believes that "finding someone who shares and celebrates a child's 'small victories' can make navigating the disability maze brighter!"

The Family, School and Community Partnership Coordinator provides parent training and assists with advocacy during the IEP process. In addition, they connect parents with community agencies for additional assistance. PAC currently has a contract with the state Parent Information Resource Center to do Family, School and Community workshops in schools to encourage parents to participate in the special education process. They also teach parents strategies for participating in their child's IEP meetings and at school in ways that create positive partnerships with the school.

Outreach

Through workshops, conferences and partnerships with state, local and national organizations, PAC provides training to more than 1,200 parents and professionals per year. They build partnerships with local, state and national agencies, schools, parents, community partners and individuals with disabilities. Many clients are referred, but the Parent Advocacy Center also relies on word of mouth. They have a very thorough website which is continually updated. Additional fliers and e-alerts are sent to surrounding districts and county special education cooperatives. Information of PAC services are also sent to the special education directors in each school district of the state. Through attending local conferences and school fairs, and through email, phone calls and mailed brochures, the center continues to outreach to families that might not know of their existence. Most staff members are parents, grandparents, or siblings of individuals with disabilities; board members are parents,

educators, advocates and community members. They know first hand the difficulty in navigating what PAC calls the "maze of disability services."

Intake and Services

According to an advocate at PAC, "many parents don't seek to find out about their rights until they are in crisis," even though contact information for the center and other advocate agencies are included on the parent's "rights document," which is among the initial materials given to them by school districts. When parents feel they are in need of support, they contact the center for consultation. Most of the work is done over the phone. However, if a meeting is needed, an appointment is made. During the initial meeting, information is collected and a personal family file is begun. Depending on the situation, plans can be made for an advocate to attend IDEA-related meetings with the parent and other services. The advocate represents the family in the best interest of the child, making sure the law is being carried out appropriately.

In addition to helping parents to prepare for their IEP meetings, PAC also provides additional services and opportunities for families. Parent Networking Conferences are offered for families to share their experiences with other families in a non-threatening and friendly environment. During these free overnight events, families gain support and information. Each center offers childcare vouchers up to $50 for parents who need help paying for it for their childcare. This particular conference is exclusively for parents, giving them a chance to spend time with other parents.

Family Enrichment Weekends offer parents, children/youth with disabilities and their siblings an opportunity to meet individuals who share similar challenges and joys each day. Parents are able to meet staff they have been talking to on the phone for a long time and attend workshops throughout the weekend. Children are engaged in age-appropriate, inclusive activities and community volunteers are recruited to serve as companions to the children to assist with the activities and ensure safety. This opportunity provides comfort to the parent who doesn't really feel comfortable leaving their child alone with just anyone. They will have the feeling of safety of their child being in the same hotel facility. Both activities include trainings on provisions of IDEA, development of the IEP and the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), community and statewide resources, and funding sources. The Parent Advocacy Center's ultimate goal is to encourage, educate and empower families.

The Parent Networking Conference and the Family Enrichment Weekend are exclusive to parents of children with disabilities. Other events are open to any interested person. Each regional center is required to do a mini-conference transition workshop per school year. Mini-conferences are a half or whole day events that offer a variety of sessions. The invites are more regional in nature when a topic is selected and families in a general area are invited. The center also offers 'special requests'. For example, a parent support group might request a workshop on special education law. A site is then chosen and invitations are sent to people in their database, agencies and information is put on the website.

The Parent Advocacy Center defines short-term success as situations in which "families find the help they need with immediate contact with a parent advocate who can assist them with the problem they are experiencing today." They define long-term success as situations in which "families (and young adults with disabilities) become independent of [PAC] support, and sustain their effective advocacy on behalf of their son or daughter with disabilities (or for themselves)." From a weekend family event hosted 25 years ago to a federally mandated and funded organization with centers in Finn, Packard and Armstrong, the Parent Advocacy Center continues to lead the way in finding innovative ways to reach families.

IDEA Regulations for the IEP Development

Development of the IEP is a five-step process. The following guidelines for each step are meant to ensure that each student's IEP is developed and implemented in the spirit and intent of the law.

Referral and Identification

A child is referred for an evaluation. A parent, teacher or administrator can refer a child to be evaluated to determine eligibility for special education services. If the parent is requesting an evaluation, it is prudent that the request be made in writing. Information provided by parents regarding their child's strengths and needs is a vital part of the evaluation and is critical in developing an IEP that will lead to student success. The law requires parents to participate in developing, reviewing and

revising the IEP, having their concerns and information considered, and being regularly informed of their child's progress.

A child should be referred for an evaluation any time the child's behavior and/or academic performance indicates that the child may have a possible disability. A child can be referred for an evaluation at any point and up until the age of 21. Agreeing to an evaluation or referral does not mean the parent has to agree to accept services. They can refuse services after the evaluation is complete.

Evaluation

Prior to evaluation, the district must obtain written parental consent. This notification must be written in the native language of the parent as required by law. Once a referral is made, a student must then be evaluated within 30 days of a parent signing a consent form or within 60 school days to complete the whole process. A child must be evaluated in all areas of a suspected disability. A set of evaluations usually consists of a psycho-educational evaluation, a social history and a classroom observation. Additional evaluations, such as speech and language, occupational and/or physical therapy or a functional behavioral assessment if behavior is an issue may be given. Parents are entitled to a copy of their child's written summary of evaluation results and have the right to review them before the next IEP meeting.

Classification

After an initial evaluation, an IEP team must determine the disability classification of the child according to one or more of the classification listed in the

federal law. A child does not need a medical or psychiatric diagnosis to be classified for purposes of getting special education services. Services should not be limited by the classification; the child has a right to the services s/he needs to meet his or her individual needs, not services based on a label given to the child.

Services

The IEP is a plan that outlines the child's needs and all the services the child is entitled to receive. The law says the IEP is to contain the following items: (a) a description of the child's "present levels of educational performance" including a description of how the child's disability affects their involvement and progress in the general education curriculum; (b) measurable annual goals; (c) a statement of the special education and related services needed for the child toward the IEP goals and the general education curriculum, as well as participation in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities; (d) an explanation of the extent to which the child will not participate with non-disabled children in the regular class and extracurricular/non-academic activities; and (e) testing accommodations and modifications needed for the child to participate in standardized testing.

Placement

According to the IDEA, placement decisions are to be made by "a group of persons, including the parents, and other persons knowledgeable about the child, based upon all evaluation data. Placements must be "as close as possible to the child's home." In fact, the child should attend the school "he or she would attend if

nondisabled," unless the IEP requires some other placement. All districts must provide a continuum of service options.

<div align="center">The Participants</div>

The participants in this study were 22 parents from 14 families with children with disabilities and eight parent advocates who provide advocacy services to these families, five of whom have a child with a disability themselves. The parents were interviewed in their homes at their request except for one parent who chose to be interviewed at the Parent Advocacy Center. The parent advocates were all interviewed in their offices at one of the centers in Finn, Packard and Armstrong.

The Parents

Twenty-two parents from 14 families participated in this study. Of the 14 families, seven were Caucasian, two African American, one Asian, two Hispanic, and two biracial. Ten of the participants were married couples, three were single family mothers, and one was a single grandmother who had custody rights of her grandchildren, both of whom have disabilities. All of the families had at least one child with a disability; however, three families had two children with disabilities and two had three children with disabilities.

Four of the children had been identified at birth with a disability, while 17 were identified either by three years of age or during elementary school. Five of the children were identified with autism, seven with other health impairments, three with

specific learning disabilities, four with multiple disabilities, one with mental retardation, and one with an orthopedic impairment.

Ten families were participating in the free or reduced lunch program. Employment status varied from unemployed to office worker, postal worker, active duty reservist, professor, and engineer. Among the 10 married couples, six of the mothers worked outside of the home. Each family is introduced in the following vignettes.

Amy and Alan. This couple emigrated from Lebanon to the United States 12 years ago to complete their college degrees. Currently, Alan works full-time as an engineer and Amy is a stay-at-home mom. They have two children. Their oldest son is nine years old and in the fourth grade. Their youngest son is five years old and is in kindergarten. He was diagnosed with autism when he was three years old.

Betty. This White mother is single and has a developmental disability. She is raising her 16 year old son who has ADHD and is diagnosed with bipolar disorder. He has been in and out of the juvenile justice system because of truancy issues for the past three years. Due to her disability, Betty does not work, but receives social security income for both her and her son. She is also a grandmother raising her deceased daughter's children ages six and four. All three children qualify for the free lunch program at their schools. She receives social security income for them as well.

Claire. This White grandmother is a real estate title officer. She receives social security income. She currently has custody of her two grandsons and has been their advocate for the past three years. The oldest grandson is 15 years old with

dyslexia, epilepsy, and ADD and the youngest is 12 years old with dyslexia, epilepsy and Tourette Syndrome. Both of Claire's grandson's qualify for the reduced lunch program at their schools.

Diane and Dave. This White couple has three sons ages 16, 14 and 12 who all have dyslexia. All three of the children qualify for the reduced lunch program at their schools. Dave is an active army reservist and has served three tours of overseas duty in the last 15 years. This has left a lot of single parenting to Diane who suffers from clinical depression. In the past, they had the boys enrolled in one of the districts in the study for only one year. However, they were not satisfied with the services and recently moved to a smaller district. They still do not receive the services they want, but they have decided to leave their sons in their current school.

Ellen and Ed. This biracial couple met while in graduate school working on their PhDs. She is of middle-eastern descent and he is White. Ed is a full professor at a local university; Ellen works part-time as an exercise trainer in order to be accessible to their three school-aged children, a 14 year old daughter and 12 year old twin sons, one of whom has Down syndrome. Ellen is actively involved in the special education process and has attended many conferences in years past. Both she and her husband are strong advocates for their son.

Fay and Frank. Both of these young White parents have a disability. She has a mild cognitive disability and he suffers from depression. Because of his depression, Frank has trouble holding jobs. Fay is a stay at home mother who frequently volunteers at school. They have two daughters. Their oldest daughter who is six

years old was born prematurely at 25 weeks and has developmental disabilities, Retinopathy and Sensory Deprivation Disorder. Their youngest daughter was born at 34 weeks and receives special education services for severe emotional disturbance and speech therapy. Both of Fay and Frank's daughters qualify for the free lunch program at their school.

Gail and Glen. This Hispanic couple has two daughters. The oldest daughter is 12. Their youngest daughter is six years old and was diagnosed with autism when she was three. Glen is an educator and Gail is an office administrator. They are both actively involved in their daughter's lives, but Gail tends to be the advocate seeking answers for their daughter as far as special education is concerned.

Hannah and Hank. This biracial couple met and married when he got out of the military. She is White and he is Black. Both of these parents work; Hank is in sales and Hannah is an office worker. They are the parents of three children. They have a daughter who is 12 and two sons, ages eight and five. Their eight year old son was diagnosed with ADHD when he was seven years old. All three of the children qualify for the reduced lunch program at their schools.

Inez. This single White mother works as a nurse. She is raising two sons. Her oldest is 16 years old and had been identified in school as learning disabled, gifted, and ADHD before dropping out of high school after his sophomore year. Currently, he is enrolled in the district's online high school program. Inez's youngest son is 12 and has also been identified as learning disabled, gifted and ADHD. Both of Inez's sons qualify for the reduced lunch program at their schools.

Jacinta and John. Both members of this Hispanic couple work full time. She is an office administrator and he is an accountant. They are the parents of two sons. One son is married and lives nearby. Their youngest son, who is 22 years old, has autism. He lives at home but holds a full time job. Both Jacinta and her husband worked together and sought out the best services for their son. She volunteered in her son's schools and continues to be an advocate for other students with disabilities and their families.

Kay and Kent. This White couple has three children. Kent works as a mechanic and Kay is a stay at home mom. She was diagnosed three years ago as having bipolar disorder. These parents are not new to the special education system. All three of their children have been identified with some type of disability. The oldest daughter is 21 and has learning disabilities. Their son is 14 and in the eighth grade. He has an orthopedic impairment. The youngest daughter is nine and in the third grade. She is identified as having a conduct disorder and is bipolar. The two youngest children qualify for the free lunch program at their schools.

Linda and Larry. This Black mother and her husband are parents to two daughters. The oldest is eight years old and is identified with Autism, ADHD and OCD. The youngest is five months old. Linda is a licensed respiratory therapist, but currently works part-time. Her husband works full time in sales. Linda is very involved in her daughters schooling and has taken it upon herself to be an advocate for other minority students too.

Mary. This Black single mother is a parent of eight children. All of Mary's school- aged children qualify for the free lunch program at their schools. Her 12 year old daughter is identified with Autism. Her family recently moved to Armstrong from Packard. She had been participating in the Parent Advocacy Center program in Packard. Upon moving to Armstrong, she transferred all her records to the Armstrong center.

Norma and Neal. This Asian mother and her husband are both professors at a local university. They are parents to two children, a son and a daughter. Their son is 13 years old and is in middle school. Their five years old daughter was born with a chromosomal disorder that was diagnosed when she was three years old. She currently attends a private preschool. Norma and Neal are weighing their options of continuing with private education or having their daughter attend a public school.

The Parent Advocates

Eight parent advocates, six White and two Black, employed by The Parent Advocacy Center were interviewed for the study. Five of them have a child with a disability and were initially involved in PAC as parents themselves. There is a total of 74 years of service among the advocates; ranging from six months to 19 years of commitment to parent advocacy.

Paula. Paula and her husband are White parents of six children. Prior to being employed by PAC, she was a stay at home mom. She has been the Executive Director at PAC for 12 years and he has worked in the field of disability for many years. When their fifth child was born, she was diagnosed with severe multiple

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disabilities. Paula and her family became involved in the family activities provided by the PAC. However, because of her husband's work in the disability field, they felt they had the necessary kinds of services their daughter needed already in place and they knew who to call as therapists for their daughter.

Rachel. Rachel is the Center Coordinator at the Finn PAC. She and her husband are White parents of three sons ages 16, 18 and 20. Their youngest son was diagnosed with autism at the age of three. Rachel is not new to the field of disability. While growing up, she saw the struggles her mom had with her physical disability; getting ramps installed in order to get into a grocery store, or finding parking spaces wide enough to get her wheelchair out of the car. However, it was a special education teacher who put the family in contact with Finn PAC. Her family became very involved in the activities of the PAC and she was offered a position. Prior to working at PAC, she was a bookkeeper in a family business. She has worked for PAC for 10 years.

Sue. Sue is the Parent-to-Parent Coordinator at the Finn center. She and her husband are White parents of a 24 year old son and a 19 year old daughter. Their daughter was born with many health issues and when she was two weeks old, they found out she had a visual impairment. They began receiving services for their daughter immediately. Prior to her being employed by PAC, Sue held various part-time office related jobs. Sue has worked for PAC for 13 years.

Tanya. Tanya is the Center Coordinator at the center in Packard. She and her husband, who is an attorney, are White parents of one daughter and two sons, none of

whom have disabilities. Tanya began working at the Packard PAC 20 years ago on a part-time basis when her children were in school full-time. Prior to her employment with PAC, she was a stay at home mom. She has held many positions while at the PAC. She has worked there longer than anyone else in its 25 year history.

Vicky. Vicky is a Family, School and Community Coordinator at the Packard center. She and her husband are White parents of three boy's ages seven, eight and 10, and twin girls who are two years old. Vicky began working at PAC a little more than 12 years ago on a contract basis to coordinate the assistive technology programs. Before coming to PAC, Vicky was a special education teacher. In her current position, she attends IEP meetings, works one-to-one with parents, and reviews IEPs, intervention plans, and evaluations.

Wanda. Wanda is the Center Coordinator at the Armstrong center. She and her husband are White parents of two sons, ages 15 and 17. Their youngest son was diagnosed with autism at the age of two. Wanda and her family began attending PAC activities and programs upon recommendation of their early childhood provider. Before working for PAC, Wanda was employed as a high school math teacher. She has been employed by PAC for the past seven years.

Yvette. Yvette is the Parent to Parent Coordinator at the Armstrong center. She is a Black single parent of five children. Her middle son suffered a traumatic brain injury at the age of 12, at which point se began attending programs at the PAC to learn all she could about advocating for him. Her son is now deceased. She held many

office related jobs before being employed by PAC. Yvette has worked for PAC for the past eight years.

Zelda. Zelda is the Parent-to-Parent Coordinator at the Armstrong center. She and her husband are Black parents of three children, a daughter who is 15 and twin 13 year old sons. Both of their sons have been identified as having learning disabilities and ADHD. Zelda realized she needed to be an advocate for her sons when the district tried to discontinue the services they had been receiving since the age of three. She attended workshops at PAC and learned how to advocate. She is currently a full-time postal carrier and has been with PAC for about six months.

<div align="center">The Special Education Planning Process</div>

Four general themes that were salient to the participants' constructions of their experiences with the special education planning process emerged from the data: (a) role of principal, (b) effects of school climate, (c) parents' understanding of the process, and (d) parents' fear and intimidation.

Role of Principal

When ask about the challenges in the special education planning process in the school districts they serve, each parent advocate identified the building principal as playing the most vital role. Specifically, they noted that building leadership is a key determinant of how a school operates, in that, when a principal is an active, caring partner in doing what is best for all students, the building tone is one of acceptance; if not, the building becomes a shell, just a place where individuals gather

to work. For example, a PAC advocate and parent of a 16 year old son with autism

said:

> I think that a principal sets the tone. I know through personal
> experience, when a principal is on board and takes a vested
> interest in a positive way it makes the parents feel like their kid
> is important. The principal who has a little time to spend at the
> table rather than sticking their head in the room for a couple of
> minutes makes a parent feel welcomed and like a part of the
> team.

Tanya, a PAC advocate with 19 years of experience, noted in this regard that,

"principals play a very big role. It's been amazing to me how different a meeting will

go and the climate will feel depending on the leadership style of the principal." She

added:

> I think if you have a principal that really understands [special
> education] and values it and wants it, it's obvious when you
> walk into the building and you sit down at the table. It's
> obvious how the staff interacts with each other. But if you have
> one that has set [the] tone of special education as an off-cast or
> even as something separate from the school environment, then
> [that is] obvious too.

This point about leadership was confirmed by Vicky, advocate with PAC for

12 years, who simply said: "I think that the leadership sets the tone. If it's open and

welcoming and warm, then the whole school will be that way. If it's the opposite,

then [the school] will be that way too." When asked if a principal's attitude impacts

the staff, Rachel, a PAC Center Coordinator and mother of the teenage son with

autism replied, "I think when staff members see a principal buy into a particular

philosophy or display a [positive] attitude in their school toward kids with autism or

any disability, and then the rest of the team is on board."

It was also noted repeatedly by parents that during IEP meetings, many of the teachers look at the principal before commenting or simply say nothing at all. As one advocate reported, "[Teachers and support staff] are much more guarded in how they interact and more afraid to speak out and talk. They have thumbs pressing down on them [in effect, telling them], 'Don't suggest that or don't ask for that.'" Further supports for this claim of administrative pressure on teachers is that, in some cases, teachers who had been quiet or guarded in the IEP meeting talk with the parents "off the record" following the meeting and tell them how they actually feel about their child's needs or other decisions reached in the meeting. Commenting on this point, Tanya, a PAC Center Coordinator, said: "We hear all of the time from parents how someone on the school team will tell them something or encourage them to ask for 'this' or 'that; but also tell them not to admit who told them because [if asked, the person who told them] would not admit to saying it."

Gail, whose six year old daughter is diagnosed with autism, describes the principal at her school like this:

> He was of no value. He made excuses that he "could not be everywhere all the time." . . . The district contracts special education through a co-op. There is no accountability with this kind of service. The principals can cop out whenever they want. Many parents stand behind them, listen to them and develop false expectations of them.

It was an inner feeling that Alan, a Lebanese American engineer and father of a son with autism, got during one of the first School Improvement Team (SIT) meetings he attended for his son. His sense was that:

[The teacher] doesn't want to say something she was told not to say. . .
[She is] not telling what [she] feels is right and being told what to do.. .
. [I] believe there is something hidden that we don't see as parents.
There is a lot of pressure put on the [special education] teachers to say
things they don't want to say, or that [the principals] want them to say.

Sue, a PAC advocate, offered this insight concerning principal support:

The staff at the middle school level does not get the support
from the principal. I've had teachers say they want to help this
kid, but if their principal finds out, they fear losing their job.
She continues, "Several of our staff has had problems with the
high schools. The students are not the issue, it is the
administrator. That's where the problem lies when it comes to
high school. Principals are not as supportive of their staff. The
staff wants to do what they can to help, but they don't have the
necessary tools or training.

Not only can principals be unsupportive of their teachers, but the districts in general

can be unsupportive to them and families as well, as Sue went on to explain.

For instance, our district as had an increase in dyslexia. There's
no economic barrier for dyslexia. Finally, a parent pushed the
issue that teacher's needed to be trained to meet the needs of
students with dyslexia. The district began to make training
available. But it took a parent nearly suing the district in order
to get the necessary training for the teachers.

However, there were three parents who had experienced a "good" principal at

least once in their child's school career. For example, Frank and Fay, White lower

income parents of two daughters with disabilities, shared that:

Our current principal is female and she provides very good
rapport. She is a seasoned principal and teacher. When needed,
she will go the extra mile; visiting at length with us on short
notice if needed. She asks questions and listens to us. We feel
she meets both our children's needs and our needs.

Betty, a single, White lower income mother of a son with bipolar disorder and ADHD

remarked that her son's former principal was excellent; "He was very caring and

really cared about all of them, not just [my son], but all of the kids with special

needs." Jacinta, a Hispanic middle income mother of a 21 year old son with autism,

spoke well of an elementary principal her son once had: "She had high expectations

of the staff, which was a benefit to all the children there, not just mine."

Many parents and parent advocates suggested that principals and teachers

needed additional training in three areas: cultural competence, following proper

procedures of the special education process, and making parents active participants in

the process. When asked what the biggest challenge was in her district, Wanda,

advocate and mother of a 15 year old son with autism, put it this way: "I think the

biggest challenge is that most principals don't understand the population that they

serve. If I'm a principal, I've got to understand who my audience is. They [the

principals] have no concept [i.e., no understanding of the population they serve]."

Another advocate expanded upon the idea of cultural competence, stating:

> I think understanding, being aware and respecting another culture, and
> taking families from where they are and [where they are] coming from
> is important. If you don't have that cultural background and
> knowledge, parents can sense that and know you are not on board. We
> need to keep ourselves updated on our clientele.

Effects of Negative School Climate

Many teachers pass judgment parents who they see as being unresponsive to

efforts to arrange or conduct IEP meetings without adequate understanding and their

situational constraints. In this regard, Tanya said:

> I think that low income families have a lot more on their plates than
> getting to an IEP meeting. That is something people really need to
> think about when they start deciding when a parent hasn't responded
> or hasn't shown up or has to cancel a meeting and reschedule it more

often than the school would like. They need to realize that the parent may not have that luxury of saying to an employer that they need to leave or to come and go as freely as one might think. They certainly can't take time without being paid. Paying the bills and putting food on the table is their priority. It isn't that they don't care about their children. . . . The red tape . . . it takes to put an IEP program together lends itself to people being a little bit worried about dotting the "i's" and crossing the "t's" than about really looking at families needs.

Most advocates felt that preservice teachers were not getting the training they needed to be effective in the diverse classrooms of today's school. For example, Paula, a PAC advocate and parent of a child with a disability stated:

 I think there are a couple of things lacking in preservice instruction, and that is the ability to supervise people, and relationship building with other professionals that has to happen. [Training in building] peer relationships, I think, would serve teachers well to have when they left preservice [training]. [In addition], we just haven't thought of teachers as supervisors [of paraprofessionals, but this] needs to happen in inclusive classrooms.

Also in this regard, Sue, a PAC advocate and parent of a child with a disability, stated:

Many of the families don't feel the schools are completely meeting the needs of their child. Teachers are coming out of school and doing the best they can in their classroom with what knowledge they have. Their [the teachers] needs are not being met. Even if they are regular education teachers, they need to be ready to work with students with a disability. The teachers have not been given the skills to recognize and identify the learning differences of the children. It goes back to higher education people—the instructors, the deans, and the professors—to make sure . . . future teachers will be able to meet the needs of their students.

Another issue that affects school climate is that parents did not have meaningful communication with teachers and administrators before, during or after the IEP meetings. They are talked to, not talked with. For example, Vicky offered: "I

think educators never stop educating . . . you go into a parent conference and they are talking at you and not having two-way meaningful communication. It's kind of like . . . 'I'm the expert . . . I'll tell you . . . and then you go on your way.' Vicki went on to say that "parents are patronized, walked on, and sold ideas." She provided an example of what she meant by "sold ideas."

> This morning I got an e-mail [from a parent] where the school "sold" this mom that her daughter should probably not receive speech services anymore because the pull-outs might cause her some peer issues. But if a kid needs speech therapy, she needs speech therapy. To me that's a sales job. She's a high-schooler; it's probably [more like], "We don't have a speech therapist so this is the way we're going to sell it to you. It might cost us a little more money to bring someone in." So they probably [provide] the least [amount of services] they can get by with and . . . speech [therapy] would be one [they could drop].

Gail, an Hispanic mother of a young girl with autism, explained how she and her husband Glen felt patronized by noting that, "in the beginning, they [the principal and teachers] tried to use their credentials on us. They wanted only to do what they wanted to do because they were the 'experts.'" Frank and Fay experienced this same type of patronization when the professional team decided it was best for their six year old daughter to no longer receive speech services because she was "too old" and she would no longer benefit from these services.

> Jacinta had a similar experience, at first.

> Maybe they thought that I would be one of those shy "whatever you say" kinds of Hispanic parents. And then when they saw I wasn't, they gave me a double dose of whatever. I just don't think they treated us very well. They didn't take us seriously. They just thought I was off the wall, out of [touch with] reality and one of those parents that [unreasonably] wanted everything. I didn't want everything. I just wanted what was best for [my son].

In the end, however, Jacinta felt that their ethnicity worked for her and her husband,

which it helped them get the services they wanted for their son. As she put it:

> They agreed [to our requests] just to shut us up. Not because I was an
> advocate, but because I was a Hispanic parent. They didn't want any waves.
> They didn't want anything to point badly at them.

Her racial minority status also was an issue in Zelda's case. As both a Black middle

income mother of twin with ADHD and a PAC advocate, she explained:

> When I walk in [to an IEP meeting] as a Black woman, the first
> thing they think is "Black, low income," and "I can understand
> why the child is not learning . . . it comes from the home."
> There's a problem there . . . you should be able to walk in with
> no color, no level of education or whatever and say, "It's not
> about the parent; it's about the child."

In this regard, Rachel, a parent advocate, shared this.

> I've had families say to me that they feel like they're not looked at as a
> team member. When I asked them why they felt that way they said
> "because they see me as a welfare mom." Whether that's [literally]
> true or not, I don't know. . . . But that's just how some parent's feel.

Many administrators and education professionals are from middle-class

backgrounds, and often their race, ethnicity, language and/or socioeconomic status is

different than that of the parents they serve. As such, the school's culture and its

professionals' expectations and experiences might not match those of culturally,

linguistically and economically diverse parent. However, one advocate offered this

insight in relation to the demographics of a school.

> I've been there where people are respectful. I can remember a Black
> parent who was treated respectfully and listened to. She was poor, a
> single parent, [and] was very articulate and bright. I also think this
> school had a high minority population. So, working with minority
> parents and children was everyday stuff for this staff. I think those
> things in combination made the difference.

She went on to say:

> I can name the schools that are the minority [schools]. I think the
> parents are treated better. There's more contact made because
> [professionals, in effect, think] . . . "We have 10 kids in our classroom
> that are Black, 10 kids that are Hispanic, and five [kids] that are White
> . . . it's just our way of life," versus [at another school] which is highly
> White. I don't think a minority parent would have that same
> experience there.

Ellen, an upper income Asian mother of a son with Down syndrome,

described one principal she encountered at the elementary school her son was

attending. The principal, a former military officer:

> would stand up while everybody else had to sit. He would talk
> down to us from his "lofty" position. I felt as if I had to salute
> him. . . . He was very authoritarian and very officious. It was
> going to go his way.

Reflecting on this experience, Ellen observed that parent empowerment threatens

some professionals because they feel they are no longer in control. As an example of

what she meant by this, she related an experience of visiting a school she was

considering for her son. She said:

> I was made to feel guilty that I had gone there without an
> appointment . . . I guess I had not gone at a time when
> everything was all set up for me. I was also treated like a leper
> when I walked into the school and heard the buzz of, "She's in
> the building, she's in the building."

After Zelda had become a stronger advocate and active participant in her twin

sons' education, she no longer was permitted to enter their school and visit their

classrooms unannounced: she first had to report to the office and be escorted to the

classroom. As she explained, "Now all these years I never used an ID to walk into a

school. Every school my children have been involved in had always given me free

range to go wherever I wanted to [go] in the school." When asked why the change in

protocol, Zelda replied, "Because I became a threat to them. They know I'm a parent

that's going to stand up for the rights of my children, make sure my children know

their rights, and . . . go for what's best for my children."

Many of the parents characterized professionals as simply going through the

motions, following a routine rather than really caring about their children. They felt

that there were no positive feelings in the way their child was acknowledged. For

example, Hank and Hannah, biracial middle income parents of an 8 year old son with

learning disabilities and ADHD, said they "don't think anyone else cared one way or

another [about our son], whether he made it or not. It was like a revolving door; take

a number, get in here and get out. [Professionals at school] didn't care." Even trying

to keep the lines of communication open did not work for them.

> There were tons of e-mails back and forth…. [but] I think they did not
> want to help us. They had had enough of us, just like we had had
> enough of them. We had been labeled just as [our son] had been
> labeled. We cared and were concerned. They were not.

Betty, a low income single White mother with a disability, had a similar

experience. She felt this way about the treatment her son with ADHD and

bipolar disorder received:

> They got a little better at following his IEP, better at talking to him,
> but never really [did] what I thought they were supposed to do. It was
> like he was not even a person, just a number, just another number
> [and] never caring. I think they should care. They didn't care that they
> were not [following] the rules. They just didn't care.

Jacinta repeatedly requested that her son learn how to count money, but the professionals thought it was too difficult for him and that, in any event, he was never going to need to count money. She added,

> To this day, he doesn't know his left from his right. . . . he doesn't know the months of the year. No one thought to teach him that. There were just a lot of simple things they didn't do. It was our opinion [that] they had no expectations of children with disabilities. They had very low expectations. [The teachers] would say, "Why bother to teach him, he won't get it and if he does, he'll forget it. It's too hard to teach him that kind of stuff."

Gail also felt that the requests of her and her husband were disregarded: "We continued to ask for simple life skills to be in [our daughter's] IEP, such as using buttons. Our requests were disregarded. I then phoned the special education director and filed a complaint. They [then] began to comply with that one." Linda, a Black middle income mother of a daughter with autism who advocates for her and other less economically advantaged racial and ethnic minority children, arrived at this conclusion regarding professionals' regard for parents' concerns and requests: "I think the more you [parents] are uneducated, the better it is for them [professionals]. I think they [the professionals] have gotten away with that [disregarding the concerns and requests of uneducated] for so long."

Several advocates spoke of the differences they see in the level of "caring" for students and responsiveness to parents across grade levels. As one advocate stated:

> I would definitely say the transition for a family of a toddler into school-based services at age three is a huge difference. That's a hard transition for families. The infant toddler [program] is warm and fuzzy

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and very family focused. You know, I often think [that] elementary school would be easier to work with because you only have one teacher primarily . . . and you still have some warmness. I do see a lot of "hiccups" at the middle school because of its structure. . . . [for example] now we have a kid who's going to seven different teachers and seven different classes. [It's] the same with high school. A lot of parents have issues. Maybe the IEP they've developed is fine; it's how each of those teachers abides by the IEP [that's the problem]. We've had teachers who blatantly say, "I don't care; if you can't do the work, then you can't be here." It doesn't matter what the [specified] accommodations or modifications are.

Another advocate saw the differences across grade levels this way:

A lot of times with early childhood the teachers are energetic, full of new ideas with wonderful things to help the child. Making that first step into the public school system sometimes terrifies parents. They don't know what to expect. They wonder if it'll be the same. The parents have one picture and the teacher may have one. They may share components of the same [picture], but they won't share the whole thing. When you go into middle school, the teachers expect the kids to be able to know how to do things for themselves. The pace is much faster. However, the parents see [the professionals' attitude] as "get them in, get them out, and they are done." The [middle school] teachers have stated, "This is the way it's going to be."

And another advocate spoke of caring and responsiveness at the high school

level in particular

It's nothing for us to hear from a parent that their child's team is saying, "Well, they're in high school now and that [an accommodation that had been available at in the middle or elementary grades] is not going to cut it." It seems especially at the high school level [that teacher] teams aren't willing to look at those individual needs. . . . and then by high school, I think it's a lot tougher. I think parent participation is looked at differently [i.e., it is less welcome].

When PAC has intervened in schools on behalf of parents, the parents report

that professionals finally started regarding their requests. For example, Kay, a White

mother of three children with disabilities, shared that, after two years of one daughter

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being suspended for things like throwing chairs in the classroom, and on several occasions the classroom being evacuated because of her actions, the team repeatedly found her daughter ineligible for services stating that her behavior did not impede her learning or that of other students. She continued, "How can they say it doesn't impede learning? [It's] because the team does not want to do anything about this because they think this is ridiculous and I am ridiculous." When asked why she thought they finally decided to identify her daughter as eligible for special education services, she replied: "Wanda, an Armstrong [parent] advocate, stepped in and threatened a lawsuit against the school district because [my daughter] had been put in a closet to be restrained." At this point, a meeting was held and Kay's daughter qualified for an IEP with a written behavior plan.

These various ways in which parents are kept from fully participating in the special education process are even more disconcerting when one considers the important role that only parents can play in the process. Commenting on the importance of parents as advocates, Paula, the PAC Executive Director, said:

> Parents are the only consistent person in a child's life. A teacher might have a vested interest for one, two, or three years, while support service individuals come in and out of a kid's life. They [the parents] have the knowledge of that kid that nobody else has. Without their advocacy, all of the pieces of the puzzle don't fit properly. They are the crucial piece that holds all of the other pieces together. Only the parent that lives with that kid knows things that are meaningful to them or that worked over time.

Parent Understanding of the Process

Even though parents have more knowledge about their child than anyone else, they are often at a disadvantage when it comes to knowledge of the special education planning process. Sue, a PAC advocate, stated: "These parents want to do everything they can for their child; but they don't know what to do or how to get the process started. Many of them are first time parents of a child with a disability and have not had the experience." Many parents do not understand their rights and responsibilities under IDEA, state law or how the special education system works. Moreover, a greater challenge than knowing their rights proved to be realizing them in the schools, given that this depended on school professionals both recognizing those rights and honoring them, which far too often was not the case.

Most of the parents in the study made an attempt to study the law but most of them found the terminology to be confusing and the source material to be anything but user friendly. To help improve parents' knowledge of the special education process, PAC provides information and advocacy training through informational and skill development events, such as their Parent Networking Conferences and Family Enrichment Weekends, all of which include training on things like provisions of the IDEA, development of the IEP and IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan), and availability of community and statewide resources and funding sources. With this knowledge, many parents have become empowered as effective advocates for their children, which is the ultimate goal of PAC. All of the parents in the study were still in contact with the PAC, but their degree of involvement with the organization varied.

Those who have become empowered as effective advocates typically attended PAC parent and family activities and/or PAC informational and skill development events, while those who were less empowered to advocate for their children independently, attended these activities and events and continued to rely on PAC representation at IEP meetings.

All three of the urban districts in the study instituted new positions or programs to address the problem of economically disadvantaged and minority parents less than full participation in the special education planning process—the Family Advocacy Specialist and Family Advocacy System in Armstrong and the Parent & Community Support Group in Finn. Although these programs may reflect a well-intended effort on the part of district leadership to be responsive to this issue, as we will see they have not had an appreciable positive effect on the lived experiences of the fourteen families and eight parent advocates who participated in the study. Most of the parents interviewed felt very uninformed especially at the beginning of the process. Gail, a Hispanic middle income mother of daughter child with autism, said, "In finding out we had a child with a disability . . . we went along with the team because we knew nothing different." Each of the parents interviewed were given the required "parent's rights" materials at the IEP meeting, but in virtually all cases there was no review or explanation of the material by the professionals.

Reflecting on her first IEP meeting, one parent said:

I didn't know what I wanted; I didn't know what [my son] needed. I just knew something had to be done. It was basically *their* [the professionals] IEP the first time, what *they* wanted, and I just agreed [to what was recommended].

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Allan, a Lebanese American engineer, recalled his first IEP by noting: "I felt uncomfortable. [I felt like] everyone knows something that I don't know."

Yvette, a Black low income parent advocate who had a son with a disability, had a similar experience. "First of all," she said, "I didn't know the law." Nobody sat down with me to explain what the IEP was or what special education was. I never had a child in special education, so as a parent I didn't know I had rights."

Hank and Hannah, a biracial middle income couple, also started out not knowing the law. They knew their son was having problems at school and sensed that he was seen as a "problem child," no one at school ever suggested that he be assessed. On the several occasions that Hank and Hannah expressed concern about their son's behavior, they were assured by his teacher that there was no problem, which only added to their frustration. Looking back and thinking of the intervention time lost, Hannah notes, "We didn't know we could have asked that our son be referred [for testing]. We could have asked that these tests be done. We just didn't know."

Inez, a single White lower income mother of two sons with disabilities, received a parent handbook when her eldest son was first put on an IEP in fifth grade. However, no one took time to discuss the handbook contents or the special education process with her. Three years later, when she attended the IEP meeting for her second son, she was no more knowledgeable about the process.

> I was called to come in for a meeting, [and] when I did, I found that the IEP was completed, printed out, and I was asked to sign it. I tried to ask questions about it. I was so confused. Still, I didn't know the rules as far as the IEP. I just didn't know.

Zelda, a Black middle income parent advocate, remembered IEP meetings ending in this manner.

> They pass the paper [IEP] around and tell you to just to sign it to [indicate that] you were at the meeting. They never tell you that, if you don't agree with it, you don't have to sign it. They never say, "Do you think [your son] needs anything else?"

As one advocate stated in this regard:

> You, as a parent, have to ask for [what you want]. That's why it's very important for the principals or teachers to tell the parent about the special education process. If you don't know, how can you ask for something?

It is clear from these examples that most parents in this study were ill-informed about what was about to happen to them and their child when they arrived at their first IEP meeting, and that schools made little or no effort to adequately inform them about a process that will no doubt impact their child and family for years to come.

Parent advocates also reported working with an increasing number of parents who have disabilities themselves. When these parents had difficulty understanding the process, a PAC advocate would attend the IEP meeting with them to help them through the procedure and interpret the information being discussed. Betty, a parent with a disability, recalled the one IEP meeting she attended without an advocate: "I wasn't able to understand a lot and they always blamed it on my disability. Everything was related to my disability."

Parents also reported being misinformed or under-informed regarding their child's educational progress and outcomes. In this regard, Inez, who works as a nurse, stated: "I became frustrated because the school wouldn't communicate with me. I

would e-mail or call the teachers and would not get a reply." Vicky, a White, parent advocate, said this about parents: "I can't think of a word to describe this . . . but a parent is told, 'We can't provide transportation,' or 'We don't provide that here.' The parent doesn't really know any better and so they say okay and sign the paper."

Given her experience with the special education system, Kay, a White mother of modest means with three children with disabilities, clearly knew and asserted her rights on behalf of her two older children. However, when she tried to do so for her youngest daughter, the district retaliated by restricting the information she could get about her daughter from her school. She explained that her daughter's IEP included the statement, "Whatever happens at school, remains at school, and whatever happens at home remains at home." She further explained, "Now, when I call the school I am told, 'Remember . . . what happens at school stays at school, and what happens at home, stays at home.' When I and the teacher can't share information with each other, how can this benefit my child and her best interest?"

Linda, a Black middle income mother of child with autism, has had access to her daughter's school restricted for actively asserting her participating in.

> Right now the school and I are fighting. I can no longer go up to the school unannounced. I have to make an appointment with the principal. There is no communication between me and the teacher. This arrangement is okay with the principal. In order for me to communicate with the teacher, I call the principal, the principal relays the message to the teacher, the teacher responds back to the principal and the principal, if she chooses or has time, responds back to me.

After fighting hard to get her now sixteen year old son initially tested for special

education services in the fourth grade, Betty described her subsequent experiences

like this:

> They [the IEP meetings] became worse. They [the professionals] lost
> my sons records more than once. We had altered IEP's and . . .
> different [inappropriate] signatures on the IEP. The goals [on the IEP]
> were not what we had agreed upon in our meeting. It was just a mess
> from the beginning. You [the parent] trusted the school [and] put faith
> in the school to do the right thing. Then they [teachers and
> administrators] don't do it. You trust [that] they will follow through
> on what was agreed upon at the IEP meeting and it doesn't happen.
> That was probably the biggest shock.

Claire provided this account of her lack of trust:

> It didn't take me very long to realize I could not trust what they [the
> professionals] were saying. When I asked for a copy of my oldest
> grandson's IEP, I was passed between the offices of two schools and
> the school board office. I never did receive his IEP. To make matters
> worse, my other grandson's IEP had altered test scores [on it] and
> several incomplete pages.

> After a year of fighting for the correct school placement for their son and

being denied what they considered to be sufficient speech therapy time for him, Alan

and Amy did not have much confidence in the school system. In this regard, Alan

said:

> There is no doubt [the school is] going to take advantage of every
> single way that [it can to make the process] go their way. So [the
> school] can go in any direction they feel they can, because they want it
> to be their way.

Alan added:

> We are watching very closely what they are doing over there [at
> school]. My wife goes and eats lunch with [our son] everyday. I was
> there today. I want to see how things are being done because I have
> lost faith with the system.

Hannah and Hank were out of more than $3000, when they paid for after school tutoring for their son. The school had informed them their son only qualified for Title I reading services. However, plans to service their son were changed. As Hannah stated: "We were happy that someone finally said they had dropped the ball . . . but it's like you wait until we had spent $3000 and then you admit there was more you could do. At last years meeting, you said you did everything you said you could do . . . and now you're telling us you didn't." The school finally admitted they erred and agreed to further test their son who was subsequently diagnosed with a learning disability and ADHD.

Once in the special education system, parents are often not made aware of additional services or equipment they could request for their child. Yvette, a Black low income parent advocate and parent of a son with a disability shared her experience:

> My son needed a Dynavox because he couldn't speak, and they [the professionals] said, 'we don't know if we could get the money for this. We don't know who could train us." She continued, "I did all of the research for them and let them know Medicaid would pay not only for the equipment, but they [the teachers] could get training. I set the training up for me and three teachers who would be working with my son and we didn't have to pay for it.

In addition to equipment, many parents are often told that transportation will not be provided for their child because there is no funding. According to Yvette, "most of these parents probably have some type of waiver where Medicaid does pay for these services. If the money is there to use, let's use it in a good way to help these kids."

Early in their experience with the special education process, most of the parents in the study assumed that professionals would implement the IEP as agreed upon by the team. They trusted them until it became apparent their child was not receiving services agreed upon during the IEP meeting. Describing her experience, Jacinta said: "I had to trust [that] what they were doing was the right thing. Then I would find out [later that] they [the professionals] are not [trustworthy]." She was so distrustful that she kept a calendar diary of the days her son was to receive his speech services. If it was less than the times agreed to on his IEP, she would call the school for a justification. Jacinta concluded: "They knew I was watching. I don't think they liked me watching like that, but I needed some kind of accountability, some kind of knowing that the contract we had with the school, called the IEP, [coincided with] what [services] he was [supposed] to get."

Many of the parents interviewed tried during IEP meetings to offer suggestions and make requests for their child, but were ignored by the professionals at the table. At this point, parents typically became frustrated, felt disempowered, and began to look to the PAC for information about the special education process and support during IEP meetings. For some of the parents, PAC advocacy became their only hope for making their voice heard in the special education process. As Betty put it:" Finding the Parent Advocacy Center was a lifesaver for me and my son." The parents in this study agree that when PAC has intervened on behalf of them and their children, the IEP meeting and special education process followed the law and regulations much more closely, eventually if not on the first try. Hannah provided

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examples of how her PAC advocate shaped the compliance of school professionals in both regards. In terms of shaping it in an IEP meeting, she said:

> They [professionals] did [explain], but I think a lot of it was because Tanya [a PAC advocate] was there saying what can or cannot happen in an IEP [meeting] or what [our son] could or could not receive. [In the meeting] they were saying they were going to give him [speech therapy] five days a week for 30 minutes [per day], but on the plan they only said [wrote] four days a week. Tanya reminded them to write down what they were really going to give him [i.e., five days per week as discussed].

In terms of shaping the compliance of school professionals in the special education process, Hannah said:

> We did have a problem at the beginning of this year. I was told they were not going to do much with pull-outs this year and [that] they would not be working with him very much. I faxed his IEP to PAC. It was written on the IEP that they were to do pull out services. The LD teacher [soon] called and said she would begin to do pull out with him.

Although many parents continued to rely on the assistance of parent advocates to navigate the special education process, some became more independent in this regard as they began to understand their rights and develop a stronger sense of themselves as capable advocates for their children. One parent, Ellen, after attending PAC parent workshops ventured out on her own to attend several inclusion workshops, the Wright's workshop on special education, and the PEAK conference in Denver for four consecutive years., . In terms of her growing capacity to advocate for her son and family, she explained: "I think that [these training opportunities] helped a lot. [After participating in them,] I'd take my books with me [to IEP meetings]. There was many a time that I knew they were absolutely wrong and I would say [to myself], 'Hmm, I need to just check that out [in my books].'"

Zelda, a relatively new Black middle income PAC parent advocate and mother of two children with disabilities, provided an example of a parent developing the skills and confidence to advocate for their children and their family and eventually for other children and parents. Five years ago, Zelda began the special education process not knowing her rights as a parent of children with disabilities, completely dependent on others to explain those rights to her. Today she advocates for her sons and other children with disabilities and their families "because," as she explained, "I've educated myself; I know where to go to get the resources. I know how to talk to the teachers in the school. I know it's not a fight between me and them; it's to make sure my children are given the opportunity to learn."

Other parents had become more independent as well. For example, Vicky, another parent who became a PAC advocate, shared her growth experience: "Once I found out about the guidelines, about the testing and the whole IEP process from the state website, and had PAC support, I felt I could fight any battle." Just as proud of the growth she had made, Jacinta explained: "I guess the first couple of IEP meetings were just [me, in effect, saying] 'Do whatever you [the professionals] think [is best].' Then I learned [through PAC] that I did have a voice and I could say what I thought and what I felt." And Linda explained her growth as an advocate for her child by saying, "I am really into PAC. I have gone to their workshops every year. I [have] received a lot of my knowledge from them. I can pretty much stand on my own now."

When asked about parents who became successful advocates with the support and guidance of the PAC, Sue, a White middle income parent advocate and parent of

a child with a disability, said that, "of the many families who have come to our conferences and trainings and have been able to continue to [advocate] on their own," one stood out in her memory. This parent, a "mom with a disability herself [who] had moved [out of state] . . . had learned enough to ask for help for her daughter." After her move, "she called back [to the PAC] to see where the parent center was [in her new city] and if her forms and records had followed her. I call [cases like this] successful [outcomes].

Parent's Fear and Intimidation

Most parents in this study have felt intimidated by professionals in the schools. A common source of intimidation was attending an IEP meeting, either as a single parent or a couple, and sitting across the table from several professionals that one doesn't know. Confronted with this situation, Zelda, a Black middle income parent advocate of two sons with disabilities, recalled:

> I was afraid to ask questions because I didn't want to sound 'dumb.' I was intimidated, because you go into a room and you are usually by yourself and there are ten people sitting in there. Sometimes they are saying negative things about your children and you don't know how to respond without getting upset. So you just listen.

Beyond sheer numbers, Yvette, a Black low income PAC advocate and parent of a child with a disability [now deceased], added that uncertainty about the extent of professionals' power and authority is intimidating.:

> [The special education process] is really a scary process when you first start because you don't know what they [school professionals] can do or what they can't do….They do kind of threaten the parents [by saying things] like, 'Well if you don't sign this, we are going to have to report you.'

Betty, a White parent with a developmental disability, knew she had to make a written request to have her son tested, but she consistently ran up against roadblocks when the school wouldn't accept her request. She provided this example: "I didn't have a typewriter, so everything I requested was handwritten. They [the professionals] would always return it saying it wasn't written right and to do it again. I rewrote it at least four times before it was good enough [for them]." Claire, a grandmother caring for two grandsons with disabilities, was overwhelmed with intimidation when she was told by a middle school social worker not to attend any more IEP meetings. Claire had been in an automobile accident 11 years earlier and had suffered a head injury. Although she had fully recovered, school professionals claimed that she did not understand what was going on during her grandsons' IEP meetings.

Hank and Hannah had received special permission for their children to attend a school that was nearer to their grandmother's house, which was preferable so they could walk there after school and stay with her until Hank or Hannah could pick them up. When their son started to have difficulties at this school, they thought about transferring him. However, Hannah recalled:

> When we talked about pulling him out of this school, the principal said, "Just remember, if you ever want him to come back here, you'll have to have my approval and I won't give it . . . You always think the grass is greener on the other side, but you won't find out that it is." So we left him there.

From her perspective as a White high income advocate, Tanya, summed up the intimidation of parents by saying,

> A lot of times [parents] are very intimidated by the system and feel
> almost unworthy in a way, which I think is unfortunate. I think they
> feel [that] they are being talked [down to] or not respected. I have been
> to more than one IEP meeting [at which] I was just appalled with the
> way parents were treated at times.

Most parents wanted only the best for their child. When they felt they had no control or did not know what they should or could be doing to help their child, they experienced feelings of inadequacy or unworthiness. In this regard, Tanya stated: "I think sometimes parents get caught into feeling like they are asking for something they shouldn't [be asking for] or they don't deserve or their [child] doesn't deserve." As one father stated, "They said that we are participants in this, but in fact we're not. They just put their opinions in writing [i.e., on the IEP]."

Parents also were fearful of retaliation if they did not agree with school professionals. Specifically, they were afraid that the professionals would take out their anger with parents on the child, who in some instances would be unable to report such ill treatment to the parent. Most of these parents felt that was just safer to agree with the professionals. Yvette, a Black low income advocate, reflected on her experience in this regard.

> I didn't want my kids taken out of my home [by a state social agency];
> so I was doing all I could to please the school [by agreeing with them],
> not knowing that [doing so] was not helping my child. In the
> beginning, I hated to disagree with them [principal and teachers];
> maybe because of fear of retaliation on my kid.

In some cases, parents were intimidated by their cultural community rather than by school professionals. When asked about the low numbers of Hispanic families involved in PAC, Jacinta offered this explanation:

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[T]here are not a lot of Hispanic families that "go public" about their kids with disabilities. As a matter of fact, my husband and I had to change churches due to our "going public." We sought out help for our son when he was very young and were looked down upon [by church members] because [of the cultural expectation that], "Mexican's take care of their own--no government help."…. it's a very, very cultural thing. You do not ask for help. You take care of your own; do the best you can. The family is there to help you so they say, but [in our case] every time you ask them, nobody comes through for you.

In all cases, however, when the PAC intervened, parents received proper treatment during the meetings. As one parent stated: "I had Tanya [an advocate] come to school with me and that made a huge difference in how the school treated me."[87] When asked if they knew who Tanya was, one mom replied, "Yes, I told them who she was and they seemed irritated. It was obvious they didn't like it at all, but it made them do the IEP meeting right."

<div align="center">Summary of Problem from Participants' Perspectives</div>

Parental involvement is a vital and legally required component of the IEP process. It is an indicator of improved educational outcomes for students with disabilities. In principle, and in the best schools, the IEP process is a partnership in which each person brings their knowledge and expertise to the table. The parent is the child's first teacher and knows him or her better than anyone else; the teachers and the principal have their own particular expertise and, together, parents and professionals determine what works best for the student, within the required procedures of the special education process. Each member of the team learns from the others in the process of determining how to meet the educational needs of the child, and everyone at the table shares the goal of providing an appropriate educational

program tailored to the unique strengths and needs of the child. In general, the parents in this study have had a very different experience. They speak mainly of the difficulty they have had in being full participants in the special education planning process of their children for reasons that have to do with the role of the principal, the climate of the school, their incomplete understanding of the process itself, and the fear and intimidation they feel as participants in it.

The Role of the Principal

The parents and their advocates involved in the study were quick to note their recognition of the principal's role in setting the tone of the building. They felt that when a principal takes an active interest in the lives of all students, the tone of the building is one of acceptance. Most advocates also felt strongly that if a principal really understands and values special education, it's obvious when you walk into the building and sit down at the table. It's obvious in how the staff interacts with each other and with parents. But it is just as obvious in a negative sense when a principal treats special education as an off-cast, as something quite apart from the rest of the school environment. Unfortunately, for most of the parents and parent advocates in this study, the principals encountered did set the tone of the building to one of acceptance and understanding of all students and one of camaraderie between teachers and parents. Instead, the tone was non-acceptance of students who had a disability and one of a lack of integrity of the principal. A principal with integrity is honest, connects with others and builds trust within a building. However, there were three parents who stated they had experienced a "good" principal at least once.

Collectively they defined a "good" principal as being one who takes time to establish a rapport with a parent, is a good listener, is very caring of all students and one who has high expectations of their staff members.

The Effects of School Climate

Unfortunately, none of the families in this study experienced a positive and accepting school climate with regard to the special education process and their child's IEP meetings. Instead, they received non-participatory and substantively- and socially-inappropriate treatment by the principal, special education and general education teachers, and related services personnel. Many parents spoke of feeling talked down to by school professionals during IEP meetings, and nearly every parent felt that they did not have meaningful two-way communication before, during, or after IEP meetings. Even though parents were encouraged to email the teachers with their concerns as an additional means of communication, most often the emails went unanswered.

Moreover, many parents and advocate reported that teachers are stifled by administrators in IEP meeting, which kept them from sharing their true assessment of the child's needs and appropriate services. In addition, other parents reported retribution from school professionals for voicing their concerns about the process or its outcomes. Two parents were no longer permitted to visit the school unannounced or walk through the school unescorted, because they voiced their concerns too many times.

School climate is the social environment of the building created by the administrator, teachers and students, something one senses when they first enter the school building. Schools with positive climates create ways to involve parents. They provide a welcoming atmosphere to all those who enter the building. In this type of school climate, families are encouraged to have a say and be an integral part of decision making on issues affecting their child's education. They will also be encouraged to develop partnerships with the teachers that will benefit their child. The parents and parent advocates in this study were of one voice in asserting that the principal sets the tone of the building, and this shapes the school climate. Unfortunately, in most cases, the principals that these parents and parent advocates have encountered have not set the kind of open, participatory tone they would have hoped for. Instead, the climate of most schools has been one plagued by issue of inadequate communication, racial and ethnic discrimination and stereotyping, professional control and retribution, and uncaring attitudes toward children with disabilities.

Parents' Understanding of the Process

Even though parents have more knowledge about their child than anyone else, they are often at a disadvantage when it comes to knowledge about the special education planning process. Therefore, it is highly important for parents to understand their rights and responsibilities, and how the system works. Each parent in this study recalled being handed the required "rights and responsibilities" materials at the first IEP meeting, but the information was never explained. Most of the parents

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interviewed felt very uninformed at the beginning of the process and just went along with the team because they knew nothing different. Because they trusted educators to do what is best for their child, they agreed to anything that sounded like it would benefit their child. However, when what had been promised did not happen or was changed, the parents became disillusioned and untrusting of professionals. Unfortunately, most of the parents did not have the opportunity for an explanation of the special education planning process. Instead, they were left to fend for themselves, understanding only what they thought they knew and putting their full trust into the professionals. However, when parents contacted PAC and participated in the many learning opportunities provided by PAC in regards to the special education process, many of them became empowered to represent themselves at their child's IEP meetings. Still, other parents continue with assistance from PAC either with attendance at IEP meetings or when other special education issues involving their child arise.

Parents' Fear and Intimidation

Parents and parent advocates reported that school professionals intimidated, making them feel inferior and unworthy as parents, and fearful of retaliation if they don't agree with the professionals. Feelings of fear and intimidation ranged from being intimidated by the number of professionals in the IEP meeting, to choosing not to speak for fear of sounding "dumb," to being made to feel incompetent by criticism in the IEP meeting for not understanding the process, to fear of retaliation for disagreeing with professionals. Many of the parents in this study have experienced

the special education process as a threatening ordeal, one in which professionals intimidated them and made them feel inferior, unworthy, and fearful of their child's well being.

<div align="center">Recommendations from Participants' Perspectives</div>

Parents and parent advocates offered several recommendations to improve the special education process in schools. First, they recommended additional training for professionals and parents as a remedy for the problems they identified in the study. They recommended workshops for inservice teachers, especially regular education teachers, to keep them updated and informed on new teaching strategies and disability awareness in general. They all felt that most regular education teachers were not prepared to work with students with disabilities and lacked adequate on-the-job support. Virtually all of the parent advocates spoke of the need for improved preservice preparation for teachers to make teacher education graduates more effective in today's classrooms, in general and especially with regard to student diversity. They felt that teachers were coming out of teacher education programs and doing the best they could with what they had been given. For the advocates, the responsibility rests with higher education, with the faculty and deans in schools and colleges of education, to assure that future teachers are able to meet the needs of all their students.

Second, virtually all parents and parent advocates recommended that parents be acknowledged more as partners in the IEP process, team members with valuable information of their children and just not passive participants. Parents wanted more

collaboration and a process that combined everyone's knowledge, preferences, and resources into an integrated whole. They were adamant about schools being transformed into places that are welcoming to parents. It was recommended in this regard that schools look at themselves from a parent's perspective and have parents give them feedback about the degree to which they were perceived as welcoming and what could be done to improve the situation. On a very practical level, the parents in this study wanted schools to give them meaningful things to do with and for their children, help them set expectations regarding their children's learning, and promote family involvement in the educational process generally. This, they believe, would enable parents to feel more comfortable at school and help generate increased parent participation.

Finally, parents and advocates felt that professionals need to keep themselves apprised of the cultural backgrounds of the families they are serving in order to understand and serve them better. It was recommended that professionals without this type of cultural background and knowledge be provided with the time and resources to develop it. As these parents and parent advocates noted, many parents can sense teachers' uneasiness in relating to them, and often interpret this as disinterest in their child's well-being.

Inquirer's Construction of the Problem

The purpose of the study was to understand the nature and effects of culturally, linguistically and economically divers parents' participation in the special education planning process in urban schools, from the perspectives of parents and

parent advocates. Three urban cities—Finn, Packard, and Armstrong—in a plains state served as the settings for the study. While there is a slight difference in their family populations by both number and racial makeup, median income and those living below poverty level, they all are home to families of children with disabilities. From these three cities, 22 parents from 14 White (seven), African American (two), Asian (one), Hispanic (two), and biracial (two) families, and eight White (six), African American (2) parent advocates, were interviewed for this study. Parents' employment varied from unemployed, to office worker, postal worker, active duty reservist, professor and engineer. Eight of the mothers worked outside of the home.

The IEP component of the IDEA was developed to bring parents and professionals together as equal partners in the special education planning process (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990). The IEP meeting was designed to serve as a communication vehicle in which joint decisions would be made about the needs of the child, the services to be provided, the anticipated outcomes, and how and when to measure them. In principle, when professionals and parents join together to work toward this common goal, a partnership is formed. Successfully creating a true parent/professional partnership requires trust, respect, effective communication, and commitment to providing each child with a disability an appropriate education in the least restrictive setting.

Research has shown that the participation of poor, working class, and racial, ethnic and linguistic minority parents in the special education planning process is far from this ideal. However, the experiences reported by parents and parent advocates in

this study indicate a more complex pattern of interaction with regard to participation, one in which race, ethnicity and language interact with education, occupation and income, or social class, as well as with the presence and nature of a parental disability. In addition, in this study the quality of parent participation and whether it resulted in outcomes that satisfied parents aspirations for their children was affected by the nature of the relationship between parents and school professionals, specifically by the way parents were treated by professionals in the special education process and with regard to their children's education generally. That is, the quality and outcomes of parent participation was affected by whether or not parents were treated with respect as a persons and clients and valued as having an important perspective and making a contribution to the process. And here, too, both the treatment of parents and the nature and outcomes of participation were affected by the interaction of the three sets of factors noted above: (a) race, ethnicity and language; (b) education, occupation and income; and (c) presence and nature of a parental disability. How parents were treated in the special education process by school professionals affected the quality of their participation in the process, which in turn affected the outcomes of the process in terms of whether or not they were satisfied with the needs and services specified in the IEP.

Of the 14 families that participated in the study, four were treated well by school professionals generally and in the special education planning process; they participated fully and meaningfully in the planning process, and they each realized outcomes from the process that satisfied their sense of their child's needs and their

wishes with regard to programming and services. These parents were Gail and Glen and Jacinta and John, both middle class Hispanic couples, Norma and Neal, an upper income Korean American couple, and Ellen and Ed, an upper income biracial couple, she Indian American and he Caucasian. Glen and John both have college degrees and professional occupations, and Gail and Jacinta hold white collar clerical or technical positions. Norma and Neal both have advanced degrees and are professors at an area university. Ellen and Ed also have advanced degrees, and Ed also is a university professor, whereas Ellen works part-time to be home with their three children. After initial training and orientation from the PAC on the IDEA, their rights under the law, and how to advocate for those rights in the educational system, all four couples were able to participate independently in the special education planning process and successfully advocate for their children with disabilities. With this group of parents, then, social class, as reflected on education level, professional status and income, outweighed their racial, ethnic and linguistic characteristics.

Another six families were treated poorly by school professionals in the special education planning process and generally with regard to their children's education. That is, they were often treated in ways that disrespected them as persons and clients of the school, devalued them and their perspectives as parents, and made it difficult for them to contribute to the planning process and their children's education generally. Included among those who were treated poorly by professionals were (a) two African American families and a biracial family with an African American partner—Mary, a poor, unemployed African American single mother; Linda and

Larry, a middle class African American couple; and Hannah and Hank, a middle class biracial couple, she Caucasian and he African American—as well as (b) an Arab American family—Amy and Alan, an upper income Lebanese American couple—and (c) two Caucasian families—Fay and Frank, a poor, working class Caucasian couple who both have disabilities, she a mild cognitive disability and he depression; and Diane and Dave, a middle class Caucasian couple, one of whom, Diane, has a disability, clinical depression.

Linda and Frank have college degrees, as do Amy and Alan. Linda and Alan both have professional occupations—she as a physical therapist and he as an engineer—whereas Amy is a stay at home mother and Frank has been out of work because of his disability. Alan's work as an engineer allows him and Amy to maintain an upper income level, even though she currently doesn't work outside the home. Linda and Larry maintain a middle class income based on her professional position and his work in sales. Although none of the other parents hold college degrees, all but Mary have high school diplomas. Hannah and Hank have white collar clerical and sales positions and thus maintain a middle class income, as do Diane and Dave, given his sales position in the insurance industry when he's not on active military duty. Even through Frank has a degree, his and Fay's income level is quite low, given his disability-related unemployment and the necessity of Fay being at home for their daughters. Though she had worked part-time for PAC as general office worker in the past, Mary has been unemployed for some time. As such, she and her eight children live at the poverty level.

Four of the six families treated poorly by professionals (Amy and Alan, Fay and Frank, Hannah and Hank, and Mary) were able to participate adequately in the special education process, but they could do so only with ongoing PAC support in the special education planning process, including advocacy representation at IEP meeting. As a result of such participation, three of these four families (Fay and Frank, Hannah and Hank, and Mary) also realized outcomes that satisfied their aspirations for their children, but here again, these outcomes were only realized with help of the PAC. The fourth family, Amy and Alan, did not achieve a satisfactory outcome for their child, even with PAC support throughout the process. They had to settle for something less than they felt their child needed.

The two families that attempted to participate in the planning process without PAC support were Linda and Larry and Diane and Dave. Only Diane and Dave were able to participate adequately in the process, and as a result they were able to realize a satisfactory outcome for their child. However, even though they did not rely on PAC during the planning process, in the end they only were able to achieve this outcome with help of the PAC. Linda and Larry were not able to participate adequately in the process on their own, and in the end they did not achieve the type of programming and services that they wanted for their child.

It is difficult to discern a pattern in the nature and outcomes of participation for this group of parents because of the PAC intervention in the special education planning process, except for the broader pattern that most parents who were treated poorly by school professionals required the ongoing assistance of PAC to participate

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adequately in the special education planning process, and all of them required PAC assistance to have a chance at realizing their aspirations for their children with disabilities. The one family that forewent PAC assistance, Linda and Larry, neither participated adequately in the special education planning process nor realized the outcomes they were seeking. In addition, another family that did avail itself of PAC support, Amy and Alan, did not achieve a satisfactory outcome for their child and, Like Linda and Larry, had to settle for something less. Although poor treatment by professional can negatively affect the nature and outcomes of participation in the special education planning process, PAC training and support was able to counter its effects.

Whereas social class appeared to outweigh race, ethnicity and language among the families that were treated well by school professionals, this did not hold with those who were treated poorly. Four of the six families who were treated poorly were middle class or above, though only two of these families had members with college degrees and professional occupations. In this sense, it appears that, with regard to how parents are treated by professionals in the special education planning process, education level and occupation may be more important in social class status than income.

Looking across the two groups of families, a striking pattern with regard to race, ethnicity and language is that all of the African American families that participated in the study were among those treated poorly by professionals and none were among those treated well, even though all of the families in the latter group

represented racial, ethnic and linguistic minority groups. Another aspect of the racial, ethnic and linguistic make-up of the group of families treated poorly by professionals is that the only other racial minority family among the poorly treated families was Amy and Alan, an upper income Arab American couple, both with college degrees and he employed as an engineer. In this case at least, social class, as reflected in education level, professional status and income, did not outweigh racial and especially linguistic characteristics, given that Amy and Alan both speak with a marked Middle Eastern accent.

Finally, the two White families included among those treated poorly, Fay and Frank and Diane and Dave, represent different social classes, Fay and Frank are a poor, working class couple, and Diane and Dave a middle class couple. Neither partner in either family had a college degree or a professional occupation, however; reinforcing the idea education level and occupation may be more important in social class status than income with regard to how parents are treated by professionals. Moreover, the fact that Diane, Fay and Frank have disabilities, suggests that disability may outweigh race and social class relative to how parents are treated by professionals in the special education planning process.

The remaining four families that participated in the study were treated very poorly by school professionals in general and especially in the special education planning process. That is, they were consistently treated in ways that disrespected them as persons and clients of the school, completely devalued them and their perspectives as parents, and made it virtually impossible for them to contribute to the

planning process and their children's education generally. These families included

Betty, a poor White single mother with a cognitive disability; Claire, a White middle

class grandmother with a head injury that affected her ability to advocate for her

grandsons; Kay and Kent, a poor White couple coping with three children with

disabilities as well as Kay's bipolar disorder; and Inez, a White middle class single

mother and licensed nurse. Betty and Kay hold high school degrees, but are stay at

home mothers. Kent has trade school training and works as a mechanic. Claire has

business school training and is a retired white-collar administrator. Betty, Claire and

Kay are parents with disabilities.

School professionals not only disrespected these families as persons and

clients and devalued them and their perspectives as parents, they purposefully made it

extremely difficult for them to contribute to the planning process and their children's

education generally through tactics such as outright harassment (Betty), attempted

exclusion from IEP meetings (Claire), prohibitions on communication with school

personnel regarding their children (Kay and Kent), and mismanagement and

manipulation of student records (Inez). As a result, all of these parents participated

minimally in the special education planning process, and in turn none of them

realized outcomes from the process that satisfied their aspirations for their children,

even with extensive training and parental advocacy from the PAC.

The fact that all four families who were treated very poorly and neither

participated in or realized their aspirations from the planning process were White has

several implications. First, in conjunction with the fact that all four families who were

treated well by professionals, participated meaningfully in and realized their aspirations from the process represented racial and ethnic minority groups, this finding runs counter to the general research conclusion that parents form racial, ethnic and linguistic minority groups participate less fully and meaningfully in the special education planning process. In addition, the fact that the four families represented both poor and professional middle class families runs counter to same general research conclusion that poor and working class families participate less fully and meaningfully in the special education planning process. Finally, in conjunction with the fact that both White families among those that were treated poorly by professionals also had one of more family members with disabilities, the fact that 3 of the 4 families treated very poorly also had family members with disabilities adds to the idea that disability may outweigh race and social class relative to how parents are treated by professionals in the special education planning process, the nature of their participation in it, and the outcomes they realize from it.

None of these constructions of the experiences of study participants should be interpreted as meaning that members of these social groups aren't disadvantaged in the special education planning process. Rather, taken together they suggest a far more complex pattern of interaction in which race, ethnicity and language interrelate with social class and its components of education, occupation and income, as well as with the presence and nature of a parental disability.

The process of navigating the development of the IEP can be very daunting. The IEP process can be an effective way of identifying and achieving learning

outcomes for children with disabilities. It is the vehicle and driving force for parents

and professionals to work in partnership in the best interests of the child, and for

strengths and aspirations, rather than limitations, to give shape to the outcome. The

process does not end after the plan is written. Rather, the IEP seeks to individualize

learning opportunities and develop the potential of the child, tasks for which the

parent-professional partnership is at the very core.

Parental involvement thus is a vital component of the IEP process, one that is

linked to improved educational outcomes for students with disabilities. But

meaningful parent involvement requires parent-professional collaboration premised

on open communication, administrative commitment to the letter and spirit of the

IDEA, a school climate and professional culture that encourage parent participation

and assume responsibility for all children, and parents who understand their rights

and the special education planning process. In the experience of participants in the

present study, however, this level of collaboration was compromised by poor building

leadership, school climates and professional cultures that resist meaningful parent

participation and responsibility for all children, teachers and administrators who do

not understand parents' diverse cultural sensibilities, and parents' with limited

knowledge of their rights and the special education process, and, quite frankly, parent

fear and intimidation instilled by the school professionals who dominate the special

education planning process.

This resulted in differential treatment of parents by school professionals.

Although professional middle class parents who with some PAC training and

orientation were able to advocate for their children and achieve adequate participation and satisfactory outcomes, most parents were not able to do so. Most of these parents were treated poorly by professionals but with training and ongoing advocacy support from the PAC were able to achieve adequate participation and for the most part satisfactory outcomes for their children. However, some parents were treated very poorly and, even with PAC training and advocacy support, never did achieve even minimal participation. As a result, the outcomes for their children were most unsatisfactory. Although the PAC was able to help some parents become independent advocates and made it possible for others to participate with support, there was a group of families who were so ill-treated by school professionals as to be beyond help.

The present study points to the power of professionals, rather than parents, in the special education planning process. Overall, the personal dynamics of IEP meetings experienced by the parents and parent advocates in this study suggested more of a "we-they" posture. The meeting's structure is one in which professionals report and parents listen, which puts authority and initiative solely in the hands of the professionals, among whom the building principal is the most influential. Professional knowledge reflected in degrees and credentials is valued, whereas knowledge of one's children based on the experiences of parenting is not. Perhaps this is why in this study professional middle class parents fared better in the special education planning process.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to understand the nature and effects of

economically disadvantaged parents and/or minority parents' participation in the

special education process in urban schools, from the perspectives of parents and

parent advocates. This chapter is divided into three major sections. The first section

presents the relevant findings of the study as they relate to the literature reviewed in

Chapter II. The second section presents conclusions and recommendations for policy

and practice, and the third discusses limitations and recommendations for future

research.

Statement of the Problem

Although federal law governing the education of students with disabilities

recognizes the important role parents play in the IEP process, there is considerable

evidence that culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse parents are not as

fully or meaningfully involved in the IEP planning process as provided for by law

(Artiles & Ortiz, 2002; Harry, 1995, 2002; Lynch & Stein, 1987; Zetlin, Padron

&Wilson, 1996). Limited participation of these parents in the special education

process is consistent with a general pattern of lower levels of participation in general

education (Ascher, 1988; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Lamorey, 2002; Moles, 1993).

However, there are additional barriers to participation associated with the special

education planning process, including, among others, parents' lack of knowledge of

their rights and conflicting parental and professional perspectives on a wide range of

special education issues and decision points, such as disability classification, child needs, least restrictive placements and provision of related services (Denton, 1983; Fish, 2008; Gerber, et al 2006; Harry, 1995, 2002; Jeynes, 2005; Lynch & Stein, 1982,. 1987; Zetlin, et al, 1992) Complicating matters further is the fact that, in some cases, educators misinterpret parents' cultural manner of deference to professionals and their economic obligation to meet basic family needs as apathy or lack of interest in their child's education (Chiang, 2007; Chiang & Hadadian, 2007; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Fish, 2008; Lamorey, 2002; Sileo, Sileo & Prates, 1996). The question of these parents' participation in the special education process is critically important for several related reasons. Although the IDEA assures parents' right to participate in the special education planning process, it specifies participation procedurally, not substantively, and thus does not address the quality, outcomes, or even indicators of meaningful parent participation. As such, schools can be in compliance with the letter of the law without achieving meaningful parent participation. The school-related interactions of parents of children with disabilities are usually more difficult, extensive, and complex than those of parents of children without disabilities, and the problems associated with these interactions tend to be intensified for culturally, linguistically and economically diverse parents and families (Harry, 1992; Lynch & Stein, 1987).

Findings

The overall conclusion of the research reviewed in Chapter II is that, rather than apathy about their children's education, lack of participation in the special

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education planning process among culturally, linguistically and economically diverse parents can be attributed to several demographic, institutional and logistic factors (Chiang, 2007; Fish, 2008; Gerber, et al, 2006; Harry, 2002; Homer, 1986; Hughes & Arguilles, 2008; Lamorey, 2002; Zetlin, et al 1996). Of the three categories of barriers to parent participation, logistic factors were of the least concern to the parent and parent advocate participants in the present study. There were scheduling, transportation, and childcare problems for some families at times, especially single parent families and those with few resources, and the existence of these logistical problems in the present study is consistent with the literature in this area. What is different in this study, however, is that for the parent and parent advocate participants, these logistical difficulties were relatively minor inconveniences compared to far more weighty and impactful problems associated with demographic and institutional factors and the relationships among them.

Institutional Factors

Institutional factors are those associated with the structure, culture and functioning of schools and school systems as institutionalized organizations (Skrtic, 1995). The discussion of findings in this regard is presented below in terms of the interrelated topics of the role of the principal in establishing a school's professional culture, and the effects of professional culture on parent participation. Each section reviews key findings of the research reviewed in Chapter II and relates them to the findings and conclusions of the present study.

Principals and Professional Culture. Leadership is a critical factor in school

effectiveness (Algozzine, Ysseldyke, & Campbell, 1994; Fish, 2008; Monteith, 1994)

and, as education has moved beyond traditional boundaries to serve ever more diverse

student populations, the principal's role has become more complex, demanding and

momentous (Billingsley, Farley, & Rude, 1993; Fish, 2008; Davis, 1980). In this

regard, the attitude and behavior of the building principal are critical elements in

creating a school climate or professional culture that engenders participation of

culturally, linguistically and economically diverse parents. Moreover, a principal's

attitude and behavior toward special education and the children it serves and their

parents have a direct impact on the success of special education programs because

they influence how well those programs are accepted and implemented by the rest of

the professionals in the school (Algozzine et al., 1994; Burrello et al., 1992; Fish,

2008; Gameros, 1995; Van Horn et al., 1992). As such, promotion of meaningful

participation of culturally, linguistically and economically diverse parents in the

special education process requires that principals establish a professional culture

premised on a "tone of absolute support for the student" and an "atmosphere of

respect for the parent" (Harry, 2002, p. 135).

The findings of the current study support research that shows that the

principal's attitude and behavior are critical factors in creating a professional culture

that supports students and respects parent. As parent advocates noted, based on their

experiences advocating for parents in all three urban districts, the principal sets the

tone of the building and the tone that is set influences the degree to which students

with disabilities are accepted and special education programming is implemented by the rest of the professionals in the school. Recall the way parent advocates explained the importance of the principal's tone and attitude. Regarding tone, one advocate explained: "If [the tone is] open and welcoming and warm, then the whole school will be that way. If it's the opposite, then it'll be that way too." Regarding attitude, another explained: "When staff members see a principal buy in to a particular philosophy or display a [positive] attitude in their school toward kids with autism or any disability, and then the rest of the team is on board."

Unfortunately, only three of the 14 families that participated in the current study had ever had such a principal in a school that their child attended, and none of these families had such a principal during the time of the study. Rather than active partners in the education of students with disabilities, the attitudes and behavior of the principals that participating parents and parent advocates described had neither set a positive tone of acceptance and responsibility for students with disabilities nor fostered respect for their parents. Instead, all current principals of participating families and most principals in the broader experience of participating parent advocates treated special education as something separate from the core operation of the school, and for the most part teachers followed principals' lead, creating a school environment that was detrimental to quality special education programming and the students who depended on it, and a professional culture that was unsupportive of students with disabilities and disrespectful and often hostile to their parents.

*Professional Culture and Parent Participation***.** These finding of the present

study support those reviewed in Chapter II about the unwelcoming and hostile school

environment that many culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse parents

face when beginning the special education process (Boyd & Correa, 2005; Chavkin,

1993; Parette & Petch-Hogan, 2000). According to Bright (1996), these parents often

feel anxious, unwelcome and misinformed when they enter their child's school

because of school professionals' negative or condescending attitudes toward them, a

set of circumstances that often leads them to become disengaged from school and the

special education process (Calabrese, 1990; Parette & Petch-Hogan, 2000; Scribner,

et al., 1999). Conversely in this regard, culturally and linguistically diverse parents

identified the "perceived attitude of school personnel" (O'Brien, 1987, p. 87) as the

most significant determinant of meaningful participation in the special education

planning process and satisfaction with its outcomes, a finding that has been replicated

consistently (e.g., Harry, 1992, 2002; Spann, 2003).

The experiences of parents and parent advocates in the present study fully

support the finding that the most significant factor in culturally, linguistically and

economically diverse parents' participation in and satisfaction with the special

education planning process is the attitude and behavior of school professionals toward

them. Unfortunately, the experiences of parent and parent advocate participants in

this study also support the finding that poor, working class and racially, ethnically

and linguistically diverse parents often must contend with unfriendly, negative,

condescending and hostile teachers. Rather than a "tone of absolute support for the

student" and an "atmosphere of respect for the parent," many of the parents in the present study questioned whether teachers actually cared about their children and their education and whether during the planning process they actually recommended what was best for their child. Moreover, most parents were intimidated by the behavior of professionals toward them, and made to feel inferior and unworthy as a parent. And, as documented and discussed in Chapter IV and analyzed further below, this unprofessional treatment of parents was related to their demographic attributes, with middle and upper income Hispanic and Asian American professional middle class parents treated relatively well, and poor, working class and middle class African American and Caucasian parents treated far less well, especially if one or both parents had a disability.

Over the past three decades, the number of parents with disabilities has increased significantly because of developments such as the independent living movement, the civil and disability rights movements, and the increasing participation of adults with disabilities in all aspects of life (Tuleja, Rogers, Vensand & DeMoss, 2000). According to the 1993 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), a multi-panel, longitudinal survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, there are about 6.9 million adults with a disability who are parents. These parents with a disability represent about 11% of the total estimated population of 57.9 million parents. They represent about 30% of the approximately 23 million adults with a disability between the ages of 18 and 64 years (Toms-Barker & Maralani, 2000). There are about six million children under 18 who live with at least one parent who

has a physical disability and about half of all parents who are disabled have physical disabilities (Tuleja, Rogers, Vensand, & DeMoss, 2000).

Parents with disabilities encounter barriers when dealing with established institutions, including their child's school and its professional culture. Typically, because the majority of children of parents with disabilities do not have disabilities, most school administrators and teachers are unaware of or insufficiently sensitive to the accessibility needs of parents with disabilities, which often creates barriers to participation ranging from physically inaccessible schools to inaccessible communication modes (e.g., no interpreters for Deaf parents or inaccessible media for parents who are blind) and inaccessible curricular formats that prevent parents from helping their children with homework (Harry, 2002; Kirshbaum, 1994). As documented in Chapter IV and analyzed below, however, parents with disabilities in the present study were confronted with a broader form of institutional inaccessibility to the special education planning process itself.

Demographic Factors

The demographic factors reported in the literature include barriers to participation related to cultural difference between parents and school professionals (Chiang, 2007; Harry, 1992, 2002; Lamorey, 2002; Lynch & Stein, 1982; Tomlinson, 2007; Zetlin, et al, 1996), as well as parents' educational level (Horner, 1986; Gerber et al, 2006)**,** socioeconomic status (Horner, 1986; Kozlezki et al., 2008) , and knowledge of their rights and the special education process (Fish, 2008; Harry, 1995, 2002; O'Brien, 1987; Rock, 2000; Zetlin, et al, 1996). Cultural difference refers to

value and behavioral differences between the majority and professionals cultures of the school and that of poor, working class, and racial, ethnic and linguistic minority parents. Research on the participation of these parents in the special education planning process indicates that they are not as fully or meaningfully involved as other parents or as provided for by law (Lynch & Stein, 1987; Zetlin, Padron &Wilson, 1996; Artiles & Ortiz, 2002; Chiang, 2007; Harry, 1992, 2002; Hughes & Arguelles, 2008; Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Tomlinson, 2007).

Although the present findings support this general conclusion, the experiences of parents and parent advocates in this study indicate a more complex and multifaceted pattern of interaction among these and other demographic factors, on one hand, and between parents' demographic attributes and the way they were viewed and treated by school professionals, on the other hand. The pattern of interaction among demographic factors is one in which race, ethnicity, and language interact with social class—reflected in level of education, occupation and income—as well as with the presence and nature of a parental disability. In terms of the interaction between parents' demographic attributes and the way they were viewed and treated by school professionals, both the quality of parent participation in the special education planning process and whether it resulted in outcomes that satisfied parents' aspirations for their children were affected by the nature of the interpersonal relationship between parents and school professionals. That is, it was affected by the way parents were viewed and treated by professionals in the special education

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planning process and with regard to their children's education generally, and this relationship was shaped by parents' demographic attributes.

Thus the broadest finding of the present research is that the quality and outcomes of parent participation in the special education planning process were affected by whether or not professionals treated parents with respect as persons and clients and valued them as parents with an important perspective and contribution to make to the process. And both the treatment of parents by professionals and the nature and outcomes of their participation were affected by the interaction of three sets of demographic factors: (a) race, ethnicity and language; (b) education, occupation and income; and (c) presence and nature of a parental disability.

Interaction of Race, Ethnicity, Language, and Social Class. A second more specific set of findings concerns the ways that demographic attributes of parent participants, alone or in combination, affected how they were viewed and treated by school professionals in the special education planning process and, in turn, how that treatment influenced the nature and outcomes of their participation in the process. In this regard, recall that four of the 14 participating families were treated well by school professionals generally and in the special education planning process, six were treated poorly in this regard, and four were treated very poorly. The four families that were treated well participated fully and meaningfully in the planning process and each realized outcomes from the process that satisfied their sense of their child's needs and their wishes with regard to programming and services. An important demographic pattern with regard to the families that were treated well is that all four were racial or

ethnic minority families—two middle class Hispanic families, an upper income Korean American family, and an upper income biracial family (Indian American and Caucasian). Although at a minimum this demographic pattern raises cautions about over-generalizing extant research findings on the lack of participation of racial and ethnic minority parents in the special education planning process, it must be considered in conjunction with the fact that all four of these racial and ethnic minority families also were professional middle class families with middle or upper income levels. All of the fathers and two of the mothers held college degrees and professional occupations, and in two of the families both parents held doctoral degrees and three of the four parents were university professors. After minimal orientation and training from the parent advocacy center on their rights under the IDEA and how to advocate for them, all four families were able to participate independently in the special education planning process and successfully advocate for their children with disabilities. Thus, the first finding regarding the effects of parents' demographic attributes on the nature and outcomes of their participation in the special education planning process is that, social class, as reflected in education level, professional status and income, outweighed racial, ethnic and linguistic attributes.

The six families that were treated poorly by school professionals were largely disrespected as persons and clients of the school, devalued as parents, and generally hampered by professionals in their efforts to contribute to the planning process and their children's education generally. Included among those who were treated as such were all three African American families that participated in the study—a

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professional middle class couple, a middle class biracial couple (Caucasian and African American), and a poor single mother—as well as an upper income professional middle class Lebanese American couple, and two Caucasian families, a working class couple, both with disabilities, and a middle class couple, one with a disability. Although all six of these families were treated poorly by professionals, four families—the middle class biracial family (Caucasian and African American), poor African American single mother, upper income Lebanese American couple, and working class Caucasian couple with disabilities—were able to participate adequately in the special education process with the assistance of the parent advocacy center and, as a result, three of them—the middle class biracial family, poor African American single mother, and working class Caucasian couple with disabilities—realized outcomes that satisfied their aspirations for their children, again with the assistance of the parent advocacy center. The upper income Lebanese American family did not achieve a satisfactory outcome for their child, even with assistance from the parent advocacy center, and had to settle for less than they wanted for their child. The two families that attempted to participate in the planning process without the assistance of the parent advocacy center were a professional middle class African American couple and a middle class Caucasian couple, one of whom had a disability. Only the middle class Caucasian couple was able to participate adequately in the process, and as a result they were able to realize a satisfactory outcome for their child. However, even though they did not rely on support from the parent advocacy center during the planning process, in the end they only were able to achieve this outcome with the

center's help. The professional middle class African American family was not able to participate adequately in the process on their own, and in the end did not achieve the type of programming and services that they wanted for their child.

The first and perhaps most striking pattern in this group with regard to race, ethnicity and language is that all of the African American families that participated in the study were among those treated poorly by professionals and none of them were among those treated well, even though all of families treated well represented racial, ethnic and linguistic minority groups. Another aspect of the racial, ethnic and linguistic make-up of the group of families treated poorly by professionals is that the only other ethnic minority family among the poorly treated families was the upper income professional middle class Lebanese American family. Whereas social class, in terms of education level, professional status and income appeared to outweigh racial, ethnic and linguistic attributes among the parents treated well by professionals, this interaction did not hold in the case of this particular poorly-treated professional middle class ethnic minority family. However, given that both of these ethnic minority parents spoke with a marked Middle Eastern accent, a possible explanation for this is that their linguistic attributes affected the way professionals perceived and thus treated them. In this instance at least, language may have outweighed education level, professional status and income, the markers of professional middle class status, with regard to how parents are treated by professionals.

Another interesting demographic pattern related to social class is that, whereas social class appeared to outweigh race, ethnicity and language among the families

that were treated well by school professionals, this did not hold with those who were treated poorly. Four of the six families who were treated poorly had middle or upper level incomes, though only two of these four families had members with college degrees and professional occupations. In this sense, it appears that, with regard to how parents are treated by professionals in the special education planning process, education level and occupation may be more important markers of social class status than level of income.

The two White families included among those parents treated poorly represented different social classes—a working class couple with disabilities and a middle class couple with one member with a disability. In addition, although the father in the working class family had a college degree, he had not held a professional position since shortly after receiving it, due in part to his disability-related inability to work, and none of the other parents in these two families had a college degree or a professional occupation, which, in the case of the middle class couple, reinforces the idea that education level and occupation may be more important in social class status than income with regard to how parents are treated by professionals. Moreover, the fact that three of four parents in these two families had disabilities, suggests that disability may outweigh race and social class relative to how parents are treated by professionals in the special education planning process.

The remaining four families that participated in the study were treated very poorly by school professionals in general and especially in the special education planning process. School professionals consistently disrespected them as persons and

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clients of the school, completely devalued them as parents, and totally stymied in their efforts to participate in the special education planning process and the their children's education, including use of tactics such as outright harassment, attempted exclusion from IEP meetings, prohibitions on communication with school personnel regarding their children, and mismanagement and manipulation of student records. These families included two poor White families—a single mother with an intellectual disability and a couple with one member with a disability—as well as two middle class White families, a grandmother with a head injury and a single mother who is a licensed nurse. The mothers in the poor families had high school diplomas and were stay at home mothers and the father in the second of these families had trade school automotive training and worked as a mechanic. The middle class grandmother had business school training and was a retired white-collar administrator. Although she had recovered from her head injury, school professionals perceived her as disabled and treated as such, and thus for purposes of this analysis she was considered to be a person with a disability.

As a result of their mistreatment by school professionals, all of these parents participated minimally in the special education planning process, and in turn none of them realized outcomes from the process that satisfied their aspirations for their children or grandchildren, even with extensive training and advocacy support from the parent advocacy center. The fact that all four of these families were White has several implications. First, in conjunction with the fact that all four families who were treated well by professionals and successfully participated in the special education

planning process represented racial and ethnic minority groups, this pattern runs counter to the general research conclusion that parents form racial, ethnic and linguistic minority groups participate less fully and meaningfully in the special education planning process. In addition, the fact that the four families represented poor, middle class and professional middle class families runs counter to the general research conclusion that poor and working class families participate less fully and meaningfully in the special education planning process. Finally, given that both of the White families among those that were treated poorly by school professionals had one or more parents with a disability, the fact that three of the four White families treated very poorly also had family members with disabilities provides further support for the idea that disability can outweigh race and social class relative to how parents are treated by professionals in the special education planning process and in turn the nature and outcomes of their participation in it.

Parent Knowledge and Support in Special Education Planning Process. Most often, parents' inability to understand and participate in the special education process was found to be due to the lack of knowledge of the special education process (Harry, 2002; O'Brien, 1987; Zetlin, Padron & Wilson, 1996). More important, parents do not realize the significance of the terms used during IEP meetings. These terms represent specific events and activities that were established procedures in the special education process (Harry, 1992, 2002). Parents and special educators most often suggested providing information about the process and parents' rights as a way to

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improve and enhance their participation in the special education process (Denton, 1983; Fish, 2008; Lushes et al., 1981; Lynch & Stein, 1987; Rock, 2000).

The experiences of the participants in the current study support these findings, and highlight the role and function of the parent advocacy center in providing parents with more information about and support in the process. All but one of the 14 families in this study received training from the parent advocacy center on their rights under the IDEA and how to advocate for them. Among the four families who were treated well by school professionals, one or both parents had a college education or an advanced degree, and all four had a middle or high income level, with one of both parents in professional occupations, and no parent with a disability. With minimal training from the parent advocacy center and no center representation at IEP meetings, these parents were able to successfully participate on their own in the special education process and achieve outcomes that met their aspirations for their children.

Conversely, only three of the 10 families who were treated poorly or very poorly by professionals had a parent with a college degree and a professional occupation, and five of the 10 families had one or more parents with a disability. With parent advocacy center training and ongoing support, five of the six families treated poorly were able to participate adequately in the special education process, including the two families in this group that had one or more parents with disabilities, and four of these five families were able to achieve outcomes that met their aspirations for their children with disabilities, including both families with parents

with disabilities. Unfortunately, even with parent advocacy center training and ongoing support, none of the four families that were treated very poorly by school professionals were able to participate meaningfully in the special education planning process or achieve satisfactory outcomes for their children. Only one family in this group had a parent with a college degree and a professional occupation. Three of the four families were female single-headed households, three had a parent with a disability, and two of the three families with a parent with a disability were living in poverty.

The role of the parent advocacy center in the present study highlights the importance and necessity of IDEA-mandated parent information and resource centers in advocating for parents and children in the special education planning process. Unfortunately, although the parent advocacy center in the present study was able to help some parents become independent advocates and make it possible for others to participate with support, a group of four families—three with parents with disabilities and two living in poverty—was so ill-treated by school professionals as to be beyond the center's capacity to help.

<center>Conclusions and Recommendations</center>

The purpose of this study was to understand the nature and effects of economically disadvantaged parents' and/or minority parents' participation in the special education planning process in urban schools, from the perspectives of parents and parent advocates. Based on the literature reviewed in Chapter II and the findings presented above relative to the direct and indirect experiences of the parents and

parent advocates that participated in the present study, the following conclusions can be drawn about the nature and effects or outcomes of culturally, linguistically and economically diverse parents' participation in the special education planning process.

First, although the nature and outcomes of economically disadvantaged parents' and/or minority parents' participation in the special education planning process is affected by logistical, institutional and demographic factors, the logistical difficulties that receive so much attention in the research literature, though real, are relatively minor inconveniences compared to far more consequential problems associated with institutional and demographic factors and the relationship among them. Moreover, logistical problems arise largely from school professionals' lack of understanding of and insensitivity to the lives and life conditions of culturally, linguistically and economically diverse parents and, as such, are a symptom of these more consequential problems. Resolving the latter would go a long way in eliminating the former.

Second, although economically disadvantaged parents' and/or minority parents can be and often are discriminated against and thereby disadvantaged in the special education planning process, so are majority poor, working class and middle class parents, including those with disabilities. That is, the nature and outcomes of parent participation in the special education planning process are shaped by a complex pattern of intersecting relationships among race, ethnicity and language, the social class markers of education, occupation and income, and the presence and nature of a parental disability.

Third, the nature and outcomes of parent participation in the special education planning process, including that of culturally, linguistically and economically diverse parents, depends on whether school professionals treat them with respect as persons and clients and value them as parents and contributing participants in the process, which in turn depends on the interaction of institutional and demographic factors. Institutionally, the building principal's attitude and behavior toward special education and students with disabilities sets the tone or climate of the school, which in turn shapes its professional culture and thus the attitudes and behavior of school professionals toward special education and the students it serves and their parents. Demographically, professionals' actual treatment of parents within the professional culture of the school, and in turn the nature and outcomes of their participation, is affected by their reaction to three interrelated sets of parental demographic attributes: race, ethnicity and language; education, occupation and income; and the presence and nature of a parental disability.

Finally, among demographic factors, social class, as reflected in parents' income and especially education and professional status, can outweigh their racial, ethnic and linguistic minority status relative to how parents are treated by professionals in the special education planning process and in turn the nature and outcomes of their participation. However, the most consequential demographic factor is the presence of a parental disability, which can outweigh race and ethnicity and social class in the special education planning process and its procedural and substantive outcomes. In the present study, nondisabled, professional middle class

Hispanic and Asian American parents were treated relatively well by school professionals and thereby fared well in the special education planning process, whereas African American parents and White parents with disabilities were treated poorly or very poorly by professionals and as a result fared worse to far worse in the process, regardless of social class.

Based on these conclusions about the nature and outcomes of economically disadvantaged parents and/or minority parents' participation in the special education planning process, the following recommendations are offered.

First, researchers and policy analysts should be cautious in interpreting research in this area of study, taking care not to let inordinate consideration of logistical barriers in the parent participation literature divert attention from more consequential issues of institutional context, race, class and disability, of which logistical problems are a symptom. They also must avoid narrow interpretations of research findings that link limited participation and unsatisfactory outcomes only to parents' racial, ethnic and linguistic minority status rather than considering these social attributes in conjunction with those of social class and parental disability. In this regard, "intersectionality" approaches to social analysis that consider the relational influences of race, ethnicity, class and gender (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1993), and especially those that extend the list of social categories to include disability (Connor, 2006; McCall & Skrtic, in press), are recommended.

Second, although research on economically disadvantaged parents and/or minority parents' participation in the special education planning process richly

documents the inappropriate behavior of professionals toward these parents, it does so

from the micro or individual level of professional-parent interpersonal interactions

rather than considering the institutional and ideological contexts in which they are

embedded. Here, too, intersectionality approaches are recommended, given their

attention to such analytic perspectives (see Crenshaw, 1993; Skrtic & McCall, in

press), as well as greater use of organizational analyses of school organization and

professional culture to promote understanding of why culturally-mediated patterns of

undesirable professional behavior persist in schools and how they change (see Skrtic,

1991, 2003).

Finally, beyond improved research approaches and analytical perspectives,

teacher education needs to attend to the often deplorable behavior of school

professionals toward parents who, after all, merely are attempting to exercise their

legally-established rights in advocating for an appropriate education in the least

restrictive setting for their children with disabilities. In this regard, teacher educators

and professional development specialist should redirect some of the time, energy and

resources currently devoted to *professionalization* toward *professionalism*, that is,

away from seemingly ceaseless efforts to standardize professional practice toward

cultivating educators' ethical commitment to the communities and citizens they exist

to serve. In this regard, the ethical spirit of "civic professionalism" is recommended.

According to Skrtic (2005, p. 152), civic professionalism:

> restores a sense of collective social purpose in the professions. It
> recognizes the professions' responsibility to the community and those
> most negatively affected by social problems, including the

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malformation of social institutions like public education, and understands that the point and value of professional service is the contribution it makes to the good society and the good life for all.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study provided an interpretive analysis of the nature and effects of culturally, linguistically and economically diverse parents' participation in the special education process, from the perspectives of parents and parent advocates involved in the process in three urban school districts. A more comprehensive understanding of the process would have resulted if the perspectives of school professionals had been included but, unfortunately, the districts declined participation. Future research should study the nature and effects of culturally, linguistically and economically diverse parents' participation in the special education process from the perspectives of parents and school professionals.

Another limitation concerns sampling. Given that the researcher only interviewed parents recommended by a parent advocacy center, the fact that those nominated were parents who had availed themselves of center services could have skewed the sample toward parents with prior negative experiences. Although this was the case for the majority of participants, parents were nominated and selected who had positive and negative participation experiences, which were borne out by the pattern of professional treatment and procedural and substantive participation outcomes among the participating families. The limitation in this regard, however, was the distribution of parents with positive and negative experiences across families with particular demographic attributes. Future research of this nature should include

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more professional middle class African American and Arab American parents with positive experiences; more Asian American and Hispanic parents with negative experiences; more linguistic minority parents with less developed language skills; and more racial, ethnic and linguistic minority parents with disabilities with positive and negative experiences.

Observations of IEP meetings would have yielded valuable firsthand knowledge of those proceedings and the interactions of parents and professionals in them. Although such observations were not possible in the present study, given the districts' nonparticipation, future research should include them.

Finally, although beyond the resources of the present study, future research on the nature and effects of culturally, linguistically and economically diverse parents' participation in the special education process should collect comparative data in suburban and rural school districts and, with regard to positive participation experiences, identify factors that contribute to effective collaboration.

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Appendix A
ACHE Approval Letter
January 11, 2007

HSCL #16391

Jan Klein
SPED
521 J R Pearson

The Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL) has received your response to its expedited review of your research project

16391 Klein/Skrtic (SPED) Parent Participation

and approved this project under the expedited procedure provided in 45 CFR 46.110 (f) (7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

The Office for Human Research Protections requires that your consent form must include the note of HSCL approval and expiration date, which has been entered on the consent form(s) sent back to you with this approval.

1. At designated intervals until the project is completed, a Project Status Report must be returned to the HSCL office.
2. Any significant change in the experimental procedure as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to
   altering the project.
3. Notify HSCL about any new investigators not named in original application. Note that new investigators must take
   the online tutorial at http://www.research.ku.edu/tutor/hsp/index.shtml.
4. Any injury to a subject because of the research procedure must be reported to the Committee immediately.
5. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents
   for at least three years past completion of the research activity. If you use a signed consent form, provide a copy of
   the consent form to subjects at the time of consent.
6. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.

Please inform HSCL when this project is terminated. You must also provide HSCL with an annual status report to maintain HSCL approval. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date. If your project receives funding which requests an annual update approval, you must request this from HSCL one month prior to the annual update. Thanks for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,
David Hann
Coordinator
Human Subjects Committee
Lawrence

cc: Tom Skrtic

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8/07/2009
HSCL #16391

Jan Klein
SPED
521 J R Pearson

The Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus reviewed your research update application for project

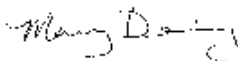.6391   Klein/ Slattie (SPED) Parent Participation

and approved this project update through an expedited review process according to 45 CFR 46.110 (b)(2) minor changes (or no changes) in a previously approved project. Your project has continued approval to 1/11/2010. Approximately one month prior to 1/11/2010, HSCL will send to you a Status Report request, which will be necessary for you to complete in order to obtain continued approval for the next twelve months. Please note that you must stop data gathering if you do not receive continued HSCL approval.

Please use the HSCL "approval stamp" on your consent forms. Just cut and paste. You may resize and reshape the text to fit your documents

> Approved by the Human Subjects Committee University of
> Kansas, Lawrence Campus (HSCL). Approval expires one year
> from 1/11/2009. HSCL #16391

If you complete your project before the renewal date, please notify HSCL. Thank you for providing HSCL with update information.

Sincerely,

Mary Denning
HSCL Coordinator
University of Kansas

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Informed Consent Statement

The University of Kansas and the Department of Special Education support the practice of protection for human participants in research. The following information is provided so that you can decide whether you want to participate in the present study. Even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without prejudice. The study will be carried out from June 2007 through May 2008. Each consenting participant will be asked to contribute from 1- 5 hours of time to the study, as explained below.

Research on parent participation in special education and Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) processes shows that parents from minority groups and parents in low income schools have a less satisfying experience. The purpose of this study is to understand parent participation in the special education/IEP process from the perspectives of parents and parent advocates who have experience with the process.

By giving your written consent to participate in the study, you are consenting to (a) be interviewed and/or observed for a maximum of 2 hours, including audio recording of the interview(s); (b) provide relevant documents; and/or (c) judge the credibility of the study's findings (maximum of 3 hours). Although names of participating individuals and agencies will be known to the field researcher, they will not be used in any written reports of the findings of the study. All audio recordings of interviews will only be available to the researcher and will be erased by her at the conclusion of the study. Moreover, through use of a data coding system, individuals' and agencies' names will not be associated with their interview or observation responses. In these ways, diligent effort will be made to preserve the anonymity of participants and agencies. A copy of this consent statement is being provided for you to keep.

Each participant can subsequently withdraw his or her consent at any time. Should such a decision to withdraw be made, please notify Jan Klein, at 913-645-8757. Your participation is solicited, but is strictly voluntary. If you have concerns about the study or your participation in it, please don't hesitate to ask questions. We appreciate your cooperation very much.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385 or write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7563, email dhann@ku.edu or mdenning@ku.edu.

Sincerely,

Jan Klein, M.S.Ed.   Tom Skrtic, Ph.D.
Doctoral Candidate and Field Researcher   Professor and Faculty
                                                               Supervisor

Consent to Participate and Be Quoted

Having read and understood the attached Informed Consent Statement and the
material below, I hereby grant written permission to participate in the research and to
be quoted.*

_____   _____
Signature of participant   Date

**With my signature I acknowledge that I am over the age of eighteen and have
received a copy of the consent form to keep.**

*Consent to be quoted means that the participant agrees that the information s/he
provides during an interview(s) or observation(s) may be quoted, in writing, with the
understanding that her/his <u>name</u> will not be attributed to what s/he said. In addition,
the participant consents to having her/his role (e.g., parent, parent advocate) stated in
connection with the quotation.

Appendix B

Interview Protocols for Parents and Parent Advocates

First Interview Protocol: Advocates

Main Substantive Questions

1. What are the most significant challenges/constraints/barriers to successful participation of poor and/or minority parents in the special education process?

2. How do the following factors affect the quality and results of parent participation:
(a) Parent characteristics – race, class or income level
(b) School characteristics – leadership, attitude of professional staff, school culture (inclusive/non-inclusive)
(c) family/child: values and beliefs of culture, age and type of disability, foster/biological parent

3. Have you seen positive examples of poor and/or minority parent participation in the special education process? Explain why you think this occurred; what were the key factors?

Pocket Protocol Questions (Asked if not raised by interviewee)

Demographic
1. How do the following factors affect the quality and results of parent participation?
a. Culture – How do schools reach out to parents from minority backgrounds or with limited English skills?
b. Education level of parent – Are there parent training classes available?
c. socioeconomic status –
d. Parent knowledge of the special education process: Do districts or schools provide any support to parents before, during or after IEP meetings?

Logistic
1. How accommodating are schools to the needs of parents, i.e., times of meetings, transportation, childcare, etc.

<u>School Related</u>

1. How do schools communicate with parents about their child's program and the special education process, including arranging meetings? Are materials translated into the native language? Interpreters?

2. Do districts or schools provide any support to parents before, during or after IEP meetings?

3. Do schools encourage parent participation in the special education process? If so, how?

4. Are school personnel receptive to poor and/or minority parents?

<u>Questions for Executive Director</u>

1. What prompted you to become a parent advocate?

2. Why is parent advocacy necessary?

3. How do the Families Together centers address this need for advocacy?

4. What are the various components of the 'network' of parent advocacy groups in Kansas, that is, the network of which FT is a key component?

5. What is your relationship with other state advocacy groups?

6. Characterize the relationship between parent advocates and the school district (district administration)? Principals? Teachers?

7. Research says that the participation of poor parents and minority parents in the special education process is not very positive; is that your experience?

8. What are the most significant challenges/constraints/barriers to successful participation of poor and/or minority parents in the special education process?

9. What do you mean by [1st challenge/constraint/barrier noted above]? Tell me how and why this is an issue.

10. Given the issues just elaborated, specifically, how do the following factors affect the quality and results of parent participation?
    (a) Parent characteristics – race, class or income level

(b) School characteristics – leadership, attitude of professional staff, school culture (inclusive/non-inclusive)
(c) Family/child: values and beliefs of culture, age and type of disability, foster/biological parent

11. Have you seen positive examples of poor and/or minority parent participation in the special education process? Explain why you think this occurred; what were the key factors?

12. What do see as the biggest challenges to strengthening parent participation in Kansas?

13. What would you consider to be a long term success in the effort to strengthen parent participation? A short term success?

14. How has the role of parent advocacy groups changed since you've been involved? Why?

15. With respect to the issues you identified earlier (q7/10), can you identify low income and/or minority parents who have experienced one or more of these issues who you think would be willing to participate in this project?

16. Would you be willing to contact these parents?

17. Is there anything I did not ask that you think is important for me to know to understand advocacy from your perspective?

Questions for Center Coordinators

1. What prompted you to become an advocate?

2. Describe your role as center director.

3. What type of training did you receive to become a coordinator?

4. What is your primary goal as a Center Coordinator?

5. What do you see as a challenge for your center?

6. What do you see as strength for your center?

7. What type of support activities do you offer parents?

8. What are the effects of those support activities?

9. Research says that the participation of poor parents and minority parents in the special education process is not very positive; is that your experience?

10. What are the most significant challenges/constraints/barriers to successful participation of poor and/or minority parents in the special education process?

11. What do you mean by [1st challenge/constraint/barrier noted above]? Tell me how and why this is an issue.

12. Given the issues just elaborated, specifically, how do the following factors affect the quality and results of parent participation?
    (a) Parent characteristics – race, class or income level
    (b) School characteristics – leadership, attitude of professional staff, school culture (inclusive/non-inclusive)
    (c) Family/child: values and beliefs of culture, age and type of disability, foster/biological parent

13. Have you seen positive examples of poor and/or minority parent? participation in the special education process? Explain why you think this occurred; what were the key factors?

14. Is there anything I did not ask that you think is important for me to know to understand advocacy from your perspective?

2nd day

15. With respect to the issues mentioned (q15/16), can you identify parents who have experienced these issues and you feel would be willing to participate in this project?

16. Would you be willing to contact these parents?

Questions for Parent Support Specialists

1. What prompted you to become an advocate?

2. What type of training did you receive to become a PSS?

3. What is your role and primary goal as a Parent Support Specialist?

4. Are parents referred? How do you get your parents?

5. What do you see as the primary needs of these parents?

6. Are the needs today the same as those of five years ago? Why or why not?

7. What is your relationship with districts, schools, principals, and teachers?

8. Research says that the participation of poor parents and minority parents in the special education process is not very positive; is that your experience?

9. What are the most significant challenges/constraints/barriers to successful participation of poor and/or minority parents in the special education process?

10. What do you mean by [1st challenge/constraint/barrier noted above]? Tell me how and why this is an issue.

11. Given the issues just elaborated, specifically, how do the following factors affect the quality and results of parent participation?
    (a) Parent characteristics – race, class or income level
    (b) School characteristics – leadership, attitude of professional staff, school culture (inclusive/non-inclusive)
    (c) family/child: values and beliefs of culture, age and type of disability, foster/biological parent

12. Have you seen positive examples of poor and/or minority parent participation in the special education process? Explain why you think this occurred; what were the key factors?

13. Is there anything I did not ask that you think is important for me to know to understand advocacy from your perspective?

2nd day

14. With respect to the issues mentioned (q11/12), can you identify parents who have experienced these issues and you feel would be willing to participate in this project?

15. Would you be willing to contact these parents?

Questions for Program Coordinators

1. Describe your position/realm of responsibility as a _____.

2. What are some of the challenges you face?

3. How do you see your unique position fit within parent advocacy?

4. In your unique position, how do you see the effect of parent advocacy?

5. How do you see the community as a partner? (CP, FSC)

6. Research says that the participation of poor parents and minority parents in the special education process is not very positive; is that your experience?

7. What are the most significant challenges/constraints/barriers to successful participation of poor and/or minority parents in the special education process?

8. What do you mean by [1st challenge/constraint/barrier noted above]? Tell me how and why this is an issue.

9. Given the issues just elaborated, specifically, how do the following factors affect the quality and results of parent participation?
    (a) Parent characteristics – race, class or income level
    (b) School characteristics – leadership, attitude of professional staff, school culture (inclusive/non-inclusive)
    (c) Family/child: values and beliefs of culture, age and type of disability, foster/biological parent

10. Have you seen positive examples of poor and/or minority parent participation in the special education process? Explain why you think this occurred; what were the key factors?

11. Is there anything I did not ask that you think is important for me to know to understand advocacy from your perspective?

2nd day

1. In respect to the issues mentioned (q10/11), can you identify parents who have experienced these issues and you feel would be willing to participate in this project?

2. Would you be willing to contact these parents?

2nd Protocol Questions for Advocates

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1. Family Demographics
   a. Family size, level of parent education, and age, grade level, disability of child
   b. How old was your child when you became an advocate?

Prior to Families Together

1. Begin by describing your first experience with the special education process
   a. When did your child first became eligible for special education?
   b. What was your knowledge of special education at that time?

2. Did anyone assist you in navigating the special education process?

3. How did the school inform you of your rights as a parent of a child with a disability?

4. Initially, how were those first meetings?

5. Did you feel welcomed? If so, how?

6. Were they receptive to your inputs/suggestions?

7. Who all were in attendance?

8. What role did the principal play? And the teachers? And the support staff?

9. Were they prepared to follow through with the IEP? Did they?

10. Did you feel you were a partner in the process? Why or why not?

After Becoming a FT Advocate

1. After you became an advocate, did you notice any changes in the IEP meetings? If so, what?

2. Did you feel you were treated any differently?

3. Were they still receptive to your inputs/suggestions?

4. Did you notice any changes in personnel attitudes?

5. Do you feel your position at FT made a difference?

6. [If not treated poorly both before and after] In talking with you, it doesn't seem you were treated poorly.
      Here is what other parents have shared with me:
            a. Feelings of inadequacy
            b. Being patronized and intimidated
            c. The "trusting" of professionals becoming "untrusting"
            d. Parent's requests being disregarded
            e. Non-caring professionals
            f. Numerous experiences of lost records
            g. Several incidences of altered documents
            h. Non-compliance of required procedures
            i. IEP filled out ahead of time
            j. Required persons not at meeting
            k. Unpreparedness of teachers – regular education and special education
            l. Unpreparedness of paraprofessionals
            m. Principals without a vested interest

7. How widespread would you say these occurrences happen?

8. Is there anything I did not ask or you have thought of that you think I might need to understand or be apprised of?

1st Interview Protocols: Parents

1. Introduction of self
2. Information about study
3. Sign Consent Forms

Demographic

1. Tell me about your family.
2. Parents:
3. What is/are your age/s?
4. Do you work outside the home?
5. What was your last completed year of school?
6. Siblings
      a. What are their ages?
7. Child with disability
      a. What is/are their age/s? Grade/s in school?
8. Type of disability

In regards to _____and the special education process:

    1. How did this all get started?

    2. How informed do you think you were regarding the special education process at that time?

    3. Tell me about the eligibility meeting for your child

    4. Did you feel prepared for the meeting? Why or why not?

    5. What made you feel welcomed?

    6. What made you feel you shouldn't talk or participate?

    7. Was the meeting what you expected? Why or why not?

    8. What concerns did you have going into the meeting that was not addressed?

    9. Do you feel that initial meeting was successful? Why or why not?

    10. How did this meeting compare to others you have had since then?

    11. How informed do you think you are now?

Why? How?

    12. Describe any challenges/barriers experienced in the special education process?

        a. Still? How were they overcome?

    13. How would you describe the ideal meeting?

    14. Overall, how do you feel about your experiences in the special education process?

    15. Please describe the school your child currently attends.

    16. Are you satisfied with the school? Why or why not?

    17. How does the school communicate with you?

    18. Please describe your relationship with the principal. What do you like most about him/her? What do you like least about him/her, and why?

    19. Please describe your relationship with your child's teacher? What do you like most about him/her? What do you like least about him/her, and why?

    20. Please describe your relationship with the support service staff. What do you like most about him/her? What do you like least about him/her, and why?

    21. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience in the special education process?

    22. If there was one thing you would like to see changed in the special education process, what would that be?

2nd Interview Protocol: Parents

1. Demographic background: parents, family, children, disability, etc.
2. How has the special education planning process been for you and your family?
3. At any time did you have feelings of inadequacy? If so, what impact did it have on you?

4. As a parent, were your requests regarding the needs of your child ever disregarded? If so, did you ever go to a higher level of authority? If so, what happened?
5. At any time during an IEP meeting were you made to feel patronized? If so, in what ways?
6. Did you ever experience non-compliance of required procedures during the special education planning process? If so, what?
7. Did you ever feel that your disability (if acknowledged earlier) might have been a factor in your experience within the planning process?
8. During the special education planning process, did you ever experience the element of trusting the professionals changing to distrusting them? If so, please describe.
9. Was the principal of your child's school a vital member of the planning process? Teachers, other staff? If so, what role did he/she/they play?
10. Do you feel your race/ethnicity affected the quality of service in any way? If so, how?
11. Is there anything I did not ask that you think is important for me to understand about your experience in the special education process from your perspective?

> Thank you for your time. If you think of anything else later that you would like to share with me, please feel free to contact me. You have my phone number on the consent form.

Appendix C

Example of Data Units

1. I/CC/B/6/Df
    I think understanding, being aware, and respecting another culture and taking
    families from where they are and going from there is important. If you don't
    have that cultural background and knowledge, then that could be a barrier.
    The parents can sense that and know you're not on board. It's not intentional;
    it might be that you are just uncomfortable because you don't know that
    culture. We need to keep ourselves updated on our clientele.

2. I/CC/B/7/Bb
    We hear all the time from parents how someone on the school team will tell
    them something or encourage them to ask for this or that, but also tell them
    not to admit who told them because they were not admit to saying it.

3. I/P10/B/7/D
    Did they ever make you feel indifferent? I mean, here you are making this
    request.

    Yes. They agreed just to shut us up. Not because I was an advocate but was
    because I was a Hispanic parent. They didn't want any waves. They didn't
    want anything bad to point badly on them. They might have given in a lot.

4. I/P5/A/5/I
    I was also treated like a leper when I walked into the school when I heard the
    buzz of 'she's in the building, she's in the building'.

5. I/P7/B/8/C
    Really the music teacher and title I teacher had Isaiah's best interest at hand.
    But that was it. don't think anyone else cared one way or another whether he
    made it or not. It was like a revolving door; take a number, get in here and get
    out. They didn't care.

6. I/P2/A/9/B
    So when did they make a change.

    They got a little better at following his IEP, better at talking to him but never
    really what I thought what they were supposed to do. It was like he was not
    even a person, just a number, just another problem, never any caring. I think
    they should care. They didn't care that they weren't with what the rules said.
    They didn't care.

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7. I/ED/A/2/Ab

They [parents] have the knowledge of that kid that nobody else has. Without their advocacy; all the pieces of the puzzle don't fit properly. They are the crucial piece that holds all of the other pieces together. If it isn't there, the child doesn't get the services that they need.

8. I/P6/B/7/Db

It never ceased to amaze me how rude these people were toward me. I don't understand why they were so hostile to me. I was trying to get help for my child. I told them they were going through more effort to not do it. Anyway, he never got the testing.

9. I/PC7/C/3/C

But I didn't know that he could have gotten more services. First of all, I didn't know the law. Nobody sat down with me to explain what the IEP was or what special education was [be]cause I had never dealt with a child being in special education. So as a parent, I didn't know that I had any rights and if I had rights, I probably would not have used them because I didn't want my family (hesitates)

10. I/P9/C/4/C

How?

Right now the school and I are fighting. I can no longer go up to the school unannounced. I have to make an appt. with the principal. The teacher right now has failed to have communication with me and this is okay through the principal. How we communicate is that I call the principal, the principal relays a message to the teacher, the teacher responds back to the principal and the principal, if she chooses or has time, responds back to me. Which is sad!

Appendix D

Coding System for Data Units

Each unit of information was given a series of five numbers and/or letters, e.g.; I, PC6, B, P4, 2B.

1. The first code in the series defined the type of data:

> I = interview
> D = document
> O = observation

2. The second code in the series indicated the participant's position and identification number in the study, e.g., PC6:

> ED = Executive Director
> CC = Center Coordinator
> PC = Parent Coordinator
> P = Parent

3. The third code in the series indicated the location:

> A = Packard
> B = Finn
> C = Armstrong

4. The fourth code in the series denoted the page number of transcript from which the data unit was drawn, e.g., P4.

5. The fifth code in the series denoted the letter of the data unit from that page, e.g., 2B.

Appendix E

Data Taxonomy

1. Demographics
Parent Advocates
Parents
Parents with disabilities

2. IEP Experience
Identification of disability
Communication
Parent to teacher
Parent to principal
Parent to Special Education staff
Parent to Parent
Principal to staff
Initial meeting
Attendees
Parent role
Observer
Active Participant
Issues/Problems
Impact of role of principal
Similar experiences
Uninformed of special education process
Feelings of inadequacy
Patronized and intimidated
Trust changes to untrust
Parent requests disregarded
General mistreatment
Major breeches of process
Loss of records
Altered documents
Procedural non-compliance
Inadequate Staff
No pre-service prep for Special Education
No additional training after license
Poor communication between General Education &
                    Special Education professionals

3. Barriers
Policy/Procedures
Cultural

Principal
Unawareness of varied cultures
Staff
Family
Support Staff
Related Services
Paraprofessionals

4. Parent/Guardian Knowledge of Disability/Policy
Uninformed parent
Self-informed parent
Outside organization
Families Together
 Purpose
 Service

5. Outcomes
Parental Expectations
Actuality

6. Recommendations for improvement
Parent
Advocate

Appendix F

Final Member Check Agenda

<u>Finn – March 24, 2009</u>
<u>11:30-2:00</u>
<u>Packard – March 31, 2009</u>
<u>11:30-2:00</u>
<u>Armstrong – April 8, 2009</u>
<u>11:30-2:00</u>

1. Introduction of participants

2. Purpose of study

3. Purpose of the member check
    a. Review draft report for credibility, accuracy, and anonymity.
    b. Promote understanding of topic and appreciation of multiple perspectives.

4. Judgment of overall credibility of the draft report
    a. Each participant comments briefly on the degree to which the draft report is a credible representation of the topic, notwithstanding that participants may take issue with particular aspects of it.

5. Correct errors of interpretation
    a. Each participant raises any and all concerns they may have about the interpretations made in specific parts of the report. Each concern is discussed by the group until a decision is reached about whether a revision is necessary and, if so, what wording should be substituted.

6. Correct errors of fact
    a. Using the same procedure as above, participants point out errors of fact and, if necessary, the group decides on the correction to be made.

7. Correct breaches of anonymity
    a. Using the same procedure as above, participants point out places where anonymity of agencies or individuals is compromised, and the group decides on how to correct the situation.

8. Qualifiers

a. Using the same procedure as above, participants decide on the appropriateness of all important "qualifiers" (e.g., <u>some</u> teachers, <u>many</u> parents, <u>all</u> part-time instructors) and, if necessary, the group decides on the substitution to be made.

9. **Collect all draft case study reports and comment sheets**

Adjourn

Appendix G

Revision Appendix

Key –

F: Factual Error
I: Interpretive error
Q: Change of qualifier
C: Addition for clarification
N: Note

F: 1. P5, L17: Change "Plan" to "Program".

C: 2. P5, L21: Change "Beyond establishing a student's present levels of educational performance" to "Beyond establishing a student's present levels of academic and functional performance,"

C: 3. P6, L1: Change "…supplementary aids are to be provided for the student, and the extent to which the student will participate in the general curriculum." to "…supplementary aids are to be provided for the student, and the extent to which the student will not participate in the general education curriculum."

F: 4. P6, L8-11: Change "Therefore by law, minority parents and economically disadvantaged parents have the right to full participation in the IEP process. However, research has shown they don't participate for a variety of reasons including demographic factors, logistical factors and school related factors" to "Therefore by law, all parents have the right to full participation in the IEP process. However, research has shown that minority parents and economically disadvantaged parents don't participate for a variety of reasons including demographic factors, logistical factors and school related factors."

C: 5. P6, L23: Change "siblings" to "children."

F: 6. P7, L12: Change "1971" to "1982."

C: 7. P9, L1: Change "Through workshops, conferences and partnerships with state, local and national organizations, PAS provides training to more than 1,000 additional families and professionals" to "Through workshops, conferences and partnerships with state, local and national organizations, PAS provides training to more than 1,000 parents and professionals per year."

F: 8. P9, L7: Change "Information of PAC services are also sent to the Special Education Directors in each county of the state" to "Information of PAC services are also sent to the Special Education Directors in each school district of the state."

C: 9. P9, L15-19: Change "According to an advocate at PAC, "many parents don't seek to find out about their rights until they are in crisis" even though contact information for the center and other advocate agencies are included in the initial bulk of materials handed to them by school districts. When parents feel they are in need of support, they contact the center and set up and appointment." to "According to an advocate at PAC, "many parents don't seek to find out about their rights until they are in crisis" even though contact information for the center and other advocate agencies are included on the parents rights document. in the initial bulk of materials handed to them by school districts. When parents feel they are in need of support, they contact the center for consultation."

C: 10. P10, L2: Change "In addition to providing representation at these meetings," to "In addition to helping parents prepare for their IEP meetings,"

C: 11. P10, L22: Change "inclusive" to "exclusive."

F: 12. P10, L23: Change "Each regional center is required to do a transition workshop per school year." to "Each regional center is required to do a transition mini-conference per school year."

C: 13. P12, L1-3: Change "A parent, teacher, administrator or doctor can refer a child to be evaluated for special education services. If a parent is requesting an evaluation, it must be made in writing." to "A parent, teacher or administrator can refer a child to be evaluated to determine eligibility for special education services. If a parent is requesting an evaluation, it is prudent that the request be made in writing."

C: 14. P12, L5: Change "Parents participate in developing, reviewing and revising the IEP, having concerns and information considered and being regularly informed of their child's progress" to "The law accords parents to participate in developing, reviewing and revising the IEP, having concerns and information considered and being regularly informed of their child's progress."

F: 15. P12. L14-17: Change "Prior to evaluation, the district must obtain written parental consent within ten days. This consent must be written in the native language of the parent as required by law. Once a referral is made, a student must be evaluated within 30 days of a parent signing a consent form or within 40 school days after referral, whichever come first." to "Prior to evaluation, the district must obtain informed, parental consent within ten days. This notification must be written in the native language of the parent as required by law. Once a referral is made, a student

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must be evaluated within 30 days of a parent signing a consent form or within 60 school days to complete the whole process."

C: 16. P12, L22: Change "Parents are entitled to a copy of their child's full set of evaluations and have the right to review them before the next IEP meeting." to "Parents are entitled to a written summary of evaluation results of their child and have the right to review them before the next IEP meeting."

C: 17. P13, L2: Change "After an initial evaluation, an IEP team must classify the child as falling into one of thirteen different classifications listed in the federal law" to "After an initial evaluation, an IEP team must determine the category for which a child falls into one or more of the thirteen categories listed in the federal law."

C: 18. P13, L23: Change ", the meaning of the evaluation data and the placement options." to ", based upon all evaluation data."

C: 19. P14, L2: Add "All districts must provide a continuum of service options."

F: 20. P15, L16: Change "This White grandmother is a retired clerical worker" to "This White grandmother is a retired real estate title officer."

Q: 21: P24, L21: Change ". . . that principals. . ." to ". . . most principals. . . "

C: 22. P25, L35-38: Change "Their needs are not being met. Even if they are regular education teachers, they need to be ready to work with students with a disability. They have not been given the skills to look at and to identify the differences" to "The teachers needs are not being met. Even if they are regular education teachers, they need to be ready to work with students with a disability. They have not been given the skills to recognize and identify the learning differences of the children."

C: 23. P26, L7: Change ". . . and they are talking to you and telling you their teaching. . . . and the parents don't get a lot of two way meaningful communication." to ". . . and they are talking at you and not having a lot of two way meaningful communication."

N: 24. P32, L25: In regards to the following quote, "When asked why she thought they finally decided to identify her daughter as eligible for special education services, she replied: "Wanda, an Armstrong [parent] advocate, stepped in and threatened a lawsuit against the school district because [my daughter] had been put in a closet to be restrained.", a parent advocate made the following statement at the MC review: "I hope 'threatened' is not accurate". The quote remained in the study because of it's relevance in getting what this family had been requesting for two years.

Q: 24. P37, L12-15: Change "Parents in the study attempted to follow the directions given them by the professionals. They trusted them until it became apparent their child was not receiving the services agreed upon during the IEP meeting, which was evident in the fact that Jacinta had to keep track on a calendar of her son's speech services." to "Some parents in the study believed that professionals would implement the IEP as agreed upon by the team. They trusted them until it became apparent their child was not receiving one or more of the services agreed upon during the IEP meeting, which was evident in the fact that Jacinta had to keep track on a calendar of her son's speech services."

C: 25. P38, L8-13: Change "When it comes to parents not having the knowledge of the special education process, PAC provides training through two workshops - - - the Parent Networking Conferences and the Family Enrichment Weekends. Both of these activities include trainings on provisions of IDEA, development of the IEP and IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan), the availability of community and statewide resources, and funding sources." to "When it comes to parents not having the knowledge of the special education process, PAC provides training through a variety of events, i.e. the Parent Networking Conferences and the Family Enrichment Weekends. PACs are required to include trainings on provisions of IDEA, development of the IEP and IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan), and may include the availability of community and statewide resources, and funding sources."

C: 26. P48, L21: Change "They all felt that most regular education teachers were not prepared to work with students with disabilities or to make wise planning and placement decisions in the special education process" to "They all felt that most regular education teachers were not prepared to work with students with disabilities."

C: 27. P53, L20: Change "Rather, the IEP seeks to maximize learning opportunities and develop the potential of the child – a journey on which the parent-professional partnership is at the very core" to "Rather, the IEP seeks to individualize learning opportunities and develop the potential of the child – a journey on which the parent-professional partnership is at the very core."

Appendix H

Audit Trail

1.   C 2. 2. 5. 1

2.   C 2. 2 .5. 1

3.   C 2. 2. 5. 1

4.   C 2. 2. 5. 1

5.   C 2. 2. 5. 1

6.   C 2. 2. 5

7.   C 2. 2. 2. 3

8.   C 2. 2. 5. 1

9.   C 2. 2. 2. 1; C 2. 2. 2 .3

10.   C 2. 2 .5. 1

11.   C 2. 2. 5. 4

12.   C 2. 2. 5. 1

13.   C 2. 2. 5. 1

14.   C 2. 2. 5. 1

15.   C 2. 2. 5. 1

16.   C 3. 3. 2. 1; C 3. 3. 2. 2.

17.   C 3. 3. 2. 3

18.   C 2. 2. 5. 4

19.   C 2. 2. 5. 4

20.   C 2. 2. 2. 1

21. C 2. 2. 5. 2. 3

22. C 2. 2. 5. 2. 3

23. C 2. 2. 5. 2. 3

24. C 3. 3. 2. 3

25. C 3. 2. 2

26. C 2. 2. 5. 2. 2

27. C 2. 2. 5. 2. 2

28. C 3. 3. 2. 2; C 3. 3. 2. 3

29. C 3. 2. 2; C 3. 2. 3

30. C 2. 2. 5. 2. 3.

31. C 2. 2. 5. 2. 3

32. C 2. 5. 2 .6

33. C 4. 2

34. C 3. 3. 2. 3

35. C 2. 5. 2. 5

36. C 2. 2. 5. 3. 3

37. C 2. 2. 5. 4; C 5. 5. 1

38. C 5. 5. 1

39. C 2. 2. 5. 3. 3

40. C 2. 2. 5. 4

41. C 2. 2. 5.4

42. C 2. 2. 5. 4

43. C 2. 2. 5. 3. 3

44. C 2. 2. 5. 3. 3

45. C 2. 2. 4. 2

46. C 4. 4. 1

47. C 2. 2. 4. 1

48. C 4. 4. 1

49. C 2. 2. 5. 2. 2

50. C 4. 4. 1

51. C 4. 4. 1

52. C 4. 4. 1

53. C 4. 4. 1

54. C 4. 4. 1

55. C 1. 1 .2. 1

56. C 2. 2 .2. 1; C 2. 2 .2. 3

57. C 4. 4. 2

58. C 2. 2. 5. 2. 3

59. C 2. 2. 2. 1

60. C 2. 2. 5. 3. 2

61. C 2. 2. 5. 2 4

62. C 2. 2. 5. 2. 4

63. C 2. 2. 5. 2. 4

64. C 2.2.5.2.4; C 2.2.2.1

65.   C 4. 4. 2

66.   C 2. 2. 5. 1; C 2. 2. 2. 2

67.   C 2. 2. 5. 2. 4

68.   C 2. 2. 5. 2. 4

69.   C 4. 4. 3. 1. 2

70.   C 2. 2. 2. 3; C 2. 2. 5. 3 .3

71.   C 2. 2. 2. 3; C 2. 2. 5. 3. 3

72.   C 4. 4. 2

73.   C 4. 4. 2

74.   C 4. 4. 3. 1 2

75.   C 4. 4. 3. 2

76.   C 4. 4. 3. 1. 2

77.   C 1. 1. 2. 1

78.   C 2. 2. 5. 2. 2

79.   C 2. 2. 5. 2. 3.

80.   C 1. 1. 2. 1

81.   C 2. 2. 5. 2. 3

82.   C 2. 2. 5. 2. 3

83.   C 2. 2. 5. 2. 2

84.   C 4. 1. 1

85.   C 3. 3. 2. 2

86.   C 2. 2. 5. 2. 2; C 4. 4. 3. 1. 2

87.   C 2. 2. 5. 3. 3

88.   C 4. 4. 3. 1. 2