

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Partnerships

Park, J. & Turnbull, A. (2001). Cross-cultural competency and special education: Perceptions and experiences of Korean parents of children with special needs. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities*, 36, 133-147.

BOTTOM LINE

The purpose of the study was to gain the perspective of Korean parents regarding their children's experience with the special education system. A myriad of obstacles are cited as interfering with a free and appropriate education for Korean families in the United States. The main themes addressed in the study included: parents' level of satisfaction regarding services; parents' experiences in dealing with professionals primarily in the exchange of information; the need for a trained, culturally sensitive mediator; and, Korean parents' perceptions of inclusion services.

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Making a Sustainable Difference in Quality of Life



TIPS

- Provide training and professional development in multicultural awareness and sensitivity for all educators and staff.
- Continue to promote use of comprehensive nondiscriminatory evaluations.
- Avoid phone calls as the primary mode of exchanging important information regarding a child's education, as Korean parents indicated much is lost in a conversation when they cannot see the person talking.
- Consider mandating a bilingual mediator for educational meetings rather than an interpreter.

KEY FINDINGS

- All participants voiced satisfaction with aspects of their experience with the American special education system.
- Satisfaction was voiced regarding quality of services received and level of individualization.
- Traditionally in Asian cultures, disabilities of children were blamed on parents, causing these children to be seen as burdens or indicators of inferiority. This conventional notion has changed in the minds of parents who received special education support in the U.S. system and eligibility for certain benefits.
- The preferred channel of communication for exchanging important information varied; however, no respondent indicated preference for communication through phone calls.
- Mediators are uniquely helpful in facilitating communication in meetings and other aspects of special education as they bring knowledge, sensitivity, and training not found in interpreters.
- The majority of parents were reportedly reluctant to place children in inclusive service placements as they preferred the level of direct attention and instruction their children received in self-contained classes in the hope for a "cure."

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METHOD

- The participants in the study consisted of eight Korean parents from seven families of children with special needs.
- Of the seven families, four families were United States citizens, one family was United States residents, and the other two families were considered F-1 (foreign students) status.

- The range of the children's age was 4 to 14 years old.
- Five of the families had a child with mental retardation, and the other two families had a child with a hearing impairment.
- A series of interview questions were developed and disseminated to the parents by mail two to three weeks prior to the scheduled interview, allowing respondents time to think about their answers.
- Interviews were conducted in the parents' native language lasting approximately 90 minutes. Each participant was interviewed 2 to 3 times resulting 20 interview sessions.
- Transcripts of the interviews were reviewed and analyzed by unitizing and categorizing the data.

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

- Chan, S. (1998). Families with Asian roots. In E.W. Lynch & M.J. Hanson (Eds.), *Developing cross-cultural competence: A guide for working with young children and their families* (2nd ed., pp. 209-250). Baltimore: Brookes.
- Kim, B.L.C. (1996). Korean families. In M. McGoldrick, J. Glordano, & J.K. Pearce (Eds.), *Ethnicity and family therapy* (2nd ed., pp. 281-294). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Lynch, E.W., & Hanson, M.J. (1998). Steps in the right direction: Implications for interventionists. In E.W. Lynch & M. J. Hanson (Eds.), *Developing cross-cultural competence: A guide for working with young children and their families* (2nd ed., pp. 491-512). Baltimore: Brookes.
- Turnbull, A.P., Blue-Banning, M., Turbiville, V.P., & Park, J. (1999). From parent to partnership education: A transformed focus. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 19, 164-172.
- Turnbull, A.P., & Turnbull, H.R. (2001). *Families, professionals, and exceptionality: Collaborating for empowerment* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.

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