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EXPLORING LATINX PARENTS' EXPERIENCES WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION:
DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY-BASED WORKSHOP TO EMPOWER LATINX
PARENTS OF CHILDREN IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

A Dissertation Presented
to
The Faculty of the School of Education
Learning and Instruction Department

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctoral of Education in Special Education

By
Gabriela A. Perez
San Francisco
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THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO
Dissertation Abstract

Exploring Latinx Parents' Experiences with Special Education: Developing a
Community-Based Workshop to Empower Latinx Parents of Children in Special
Education

Parent involvement has been found to be predictive of successful student learning. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), parents are required to be active participants in the development of their child's special education. Latinx parents of children in special education face various challenges when it comes to parent involvement. A sample size of seven Latinx mothers with children in special education participated in this study, whose aim was to examine Latinx parents' experiences in navigating the special education process and to identify and explore culturally responsive interventions that can increase parents' participation and advocacy for their children with disabilities. An eight-week study was conducted during a weekly workshop that focused on various topics: (a) understanding special education, (b) increasing knowledge about services available to support children's academic progress, (c) communicating and working collaboratively to increase family-school partnerships, and (d) learning strategies to improve advocacy and participation. In order to understand the experiences of the participants, I used Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) framework was used to examine the intersectionality of race, language, disability, education, and cultural subjugation specific to Latinx parents in special education. The purpose of this study is to aid Latinx parents with foundational knowledge about the special education system, to create opportunities to increase their social capital in a community-based workshop setting. The analysis revealed that when Latinx parents are

informed about how the special education system works, they show a commitment to learn about resources, access information, engage in transformation ways, become advocates, and learn to empower each other. Understanding the barriers that prevent Latinx parents from participating in their child's special education process can help inform practices and future research.

Keywords: Special Education, Individualized education plan, Latinx parents, advocacy, parent engagement, advocacy

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate’s dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Special Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
SIGNATURE PAGE	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	ix

Chapter	Page
I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	1
Purpose of the Study	6
Research Questions	6
Theoretical Framework	7
Significance of the Study	12
Background and Need	13
Definition of Terms	20
Summary	22
II. THE REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	23
Special Education, Parents, Disproportionality	24
Latinx and the Demographic Imperatives	26
Race, Culture, and Special Education	27
Latinx Parent Involvement and Disabled Students	29
Latinx Parent Participation in the Special Education Process	30
Latinx Parents and Teachers	31
Advocacy and Parent Involvement	34
Culturally Response Programs	35
Summary	37
III. METHODS	39
Research Design	40
Data Collection	41
Setting	41
Participants	42
Participant Recruitment	42
Participant Profiles	42
Protection of Human Subjects	44
Intervention	44
Data Sources	49
Procedure and Timelines	49
Data Analysis	53
Validity	63

Limitations	64
Positionality	64
Summary	66
IV. RESULTS	67
Research Question One	68
Research Question Two	77
Summary	84
V. SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS	86
Summary of Study	86
Summary of Findings	87
Limitations	94
Discussion of Findings	95
Implication for Research	98
Implication for Practice	99
Conclusion	101
REFERENCES	103
APPENDICES	112
APPENDIX A: Transcript of Verbal Consent for Participation in Research	112
APPENDIX B: Transcripción del consentimiento verbal para participar en la investigación	114
APPENDIX C: Workshop Handouts Workshop Questions for discussion with Latinx parents	116
APPENDIX D: Workshop Questions for discussion with Latinx parents	118
APPENDIX E: Preguntas para los talleres los padres	120

List of Tables

Table 1 Timeline for Data Collection	49
Table 2 Workshop Questions	53
Table 3 Summary of Research Questions and Data Collection Method, Data Type and Analysis Method	56
Table 4 Summary of Open Codes, Axial Codes and Themes for Research Question 1	59
Table 5 Summary of Open Codes, Axial Codes and Themes for Research Question 2 ,.....	60
Table 6 Research Questions and Findings	88

CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Parent involvement has been found to be predictive of successful student learning outcomes when parents form full partnerships with educators and fully integrate within the school systems. Parent involvement is commonly defined by familial participation, parental expectations, parental attendance, and participation in school activities (Veas, Castejon, Miñano, & Gilar-Corbi, 2018). This definition has been criticized over the years because it utilizes a standardized knowledge of what parent involvement means, which often yields to inappropriate measures for parent engagement for culturally diverse families. Latinx parents of children in special education face different challenges when it comes to parental involvement. Aceves (2014) stated that under the special education federal law, the vision of parents as equal partners in special education is elusive because it ignores the reality of the barriers unique to Latinx parents that impact their participation and advocacy skills. Salas (2004) called for a pedagogical shift in the way educators engage diverse families to ensure that all parents, regardless of their ethnicity, language, and gender, have the right to act on behalf of their children's education. For Latinx parents, language, immigration status, and social class can shape their role with regard to their parental involvement and advocacy in schools. This is particularly an area of interest in research, as Latinx continue to be overrepresented in special education, resulting in educational inequities. Research examining Latinx parent engagement and advocacy in special education with student success outcomes is scarce, but some findings have included a perceived lack of parental involvement and lack of utilization of services (Hughes, Valle-Riestra, & Arguelles, 2008).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) emphasizes the importance of parent involvement and embeds the rights of parents to consents, evaluations, and procedural safeguards (Burke, 2017). Federal laws in the field of education emphasize the importance of school and parent relationships by positioning parents as “partners,” “protectors,” and “advocators” (Hughes, Valle-Riestra, & Arguelles, 2008). Additionally, parents are required to be active members in the development of their child’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP) (Burke, 2017). IDEA’s presumption that parents know how to advocate for their children is a barrier in itself for Latinx parents. The assumption that parents have a choice in the services their children receive assumes that parents also have access to equity within the education system and the advocacy skills needed to exercise their rights. Parents must have knowledge of procedural requirement and the bureaucratic structures of school, otherwise schools may fail to engage parents in meaningful collaboration (Goss, 2019). In a study by Burke et al. (2018), parents were observed to only participate for about 15% of the IEP meeting. Although the study was not desegregated by race, Burke et al., argued that other studies have reported that Latinx parents are less likely to participate in IEP meetings due to systemic barriers. Special education laws are supported by family-centered approaches to services that emphasize the importance of the relationship between parents and schools; however, for most Latinx parents, developing a safe relationship with their children’s school has been a challenge because they do not feel welcome and often the systemic barriers discourage their engagement.

Parent participation in itself reinforces the inequalities that exist in our education system. Parents with greater access to resources may be more readily available to participate in meetings, advocate for resources, and have full knowledge of their rights. Latinx parents face systemic barriers that are unique to them and prevent them from fully exercising their participation in

special education. Some of these barriers have been identified across studies, such as (a) scheduling of meetings/amount of time for meetings, (b) transportation constraints, (c) parent intimidation of the IEP process/reluctance to question professionals, (d) educational jargon and paperwork, (e) translation services, and (f) financial constraints (Zetlin, Padron, & Wilson, 1996). Mueller et al. (2009) depicted the experiences of Latinx parents in special education and noted that most of them reported feeling alienated, perceived power structure conflicts, and overall dissatisfaction with the education and services delivered to their children. Their findings indicated that a cultural disconnect existed that influenced the participants' level of participation. Consistent with Mueller et al.'s (2009) study, Salas (2004) conducted a study through a series of interviews with 10 Mexican American families over a year to examine their experience in IEP meetings. In her findings, Salas (2004) noted the following:

Often, their voice is not heard and when it is, that voice is often discounted and not respected. In addition, the role of the special education system as perceived by the women of this study can be hurtful and is seen as something that they have to tolerate for their children to receive services. (p. 190)

Latinx parents' voices are often silenced through systemic barriers that continue to marginalize them and impact the educational experience of their children. According to many research studies, such as Tejero Hughes et al. (2008), parents often feel as if they are not welcomed within their schools when they try to advocate for their children. Parents are met with barriers that keep them from accessing resources. It is important to recognize the interrelationships among these factors to develop more culturally responsive interventions to increase Latinx parent advocacy in the special education system. The concept of parent participation ought to be re-conceptualized to take into account cultural values that impact the

meaning of parent involvement and advocacy and create interventions that meet the needs of diverse families. The current system as it stands does not promote democracy; it continues to marginalize Latinx parents in special education by silencing their voices and preventing them from accessing the resources that under federal law are constituted as their right to practice.

Latinx are among the fastest growing minority population in the United States. As a result, U.S. schools are experiencing an increase in Latinx children with special education needs who require services (Hughes Tejero, Valle-Riestra, & Arguelles, 2008). The body of research on Latinx parental involvement with students with disabilities is limited. Currently, the special education system requires parents to be their children's advocates to receive interventions to optimize child outcomes (Cohen, 2013). Research on Latinx parents' involvement in special education is important because it will help create strategies to improve their advocacy and participation, identify inhibiting factors that impact service delivery, and improve partnerships with teachers and administrators.

Latinx parents face the complexities of raising children in bicultural settings in which participation expectations may reflect the cultural hegemony that influences the legal processes and procedures that parents must navigate. Cultural differences between how Latinx parents view disabilities and special education's goal of promoting independence are the opposite of the collectivist views Latinx parents tend to uphold. Researchers have argued that special education is a culture of its own in which parents often feel lonely, confused, powerless, and overwhelmed (Mueller, Milian, & Islas Lopez, 2009). The existing body of research on Latinx parent participation highlights the value of collectivism in engaging parent participation to build community and reduce feelings of alienation that stem from navigating a system that parents often do not feel they are a part of. Aceves (2014) argued that community-based parent training

programs help Latinx parents build social and cultural capital that is often inaccessible.

Similarly, Burke et al. (2018) maintained that advocacy programs tailored for Latinx parents may enable them to participate in IEP meetings and advocate for their children to access appropriate services.

Parents who self-identify as being from culturally diverse backgrounds and having low socioeconomic status report possessing less knowledge about the special education system and having limited access to methods for acquiring that information (Sheppard, 2017). Some researchers have argued that demographic characteristics such as race and home language are better predictors than academic performance of how students will be placed in special education (Denver, Raines, Dowdy, & Hostutler; 2016). Goss (2019) argued that the degree to which parents are involved in schools is shaped by social and economic resources. Service delivery in special education continues to place barriers for parents if they attempt to enter spaces or communities in which they often feel unwelcome and disempowered. It is necessary to improve the delivery of services to Latinx parents not only to help them understand their resources, but also to increase their empowerment to participate. Burke et al. (2018) posited that empowerment functions similarly to advocacy across three contexts: (a) personal (own perception of self-efficacy), (b) interpersonal (the ability to influence others), and (c) political (social change). Furthermore, she emphasized that parents of children with disabilities tend to experience disempowerment across all three contexts. Latinx parents' self-perception of low competence and knowledge about the special education system may increase feelings of unease that impact their interactions with teachers and administrators, making home-school collaboration difficult.

Kalyanpur et al. (2000) contended that although special education's legal mandate is based on the ideology of equity, its epistemology is built on the idea of a hierarchy of

professional knowledge. As a result, the decision-making process often depends heavily on the knowledge of professionals rather than valuing parents' knowledge of their children. Due to the heavily legal jargon that appears in special education paperwork and language proficiency limitations, Latinx parents' advocacy efforts may be challenged because they do not have the necessary resources to question professionals' opinions, thus creating a power imbalance in the home-school partnership.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine Latinx parents' experiences of the special education process in order to identify and explore culturally responsive interventions that can increase parents' participation and advocacy for their children with disabilities. A support group for Latinx mothers with students in special education was conducted over 8 weeks. *Sueños* Education Specialist and I conducted weekly workshops centered on special education and individualized education plan (IEP) practices for mothers who have children in middle or high school in the Bay Area. Over the course of the 8 weeks, I conducted workshops with the mothers to obtain information about their current experiences while navigating the special education system, their understanding of their rights, and what resources or knowledge they need to increase their level of advocacy for their children with their current IEP teams.

Research Questions

Therefore, I propose the following questions for my research:

1. In what ways does a community-based workshop program for Latinx parents increase their IEP advocacy knowledge?
 - 1a. How can a parent-to-parent community-based workshop program provide support to Latinx parents in special education?
2. What are parents' perceptions of how they are included in the special education process of referral, evaluation, placement, and education planning?

2a. How do parents' perceptions of school implementation of IEP services and practices impact parent involvement?

2b. What perceptions do Latinx parents have of the ways that schools structure opportunities for engagement for them and their children?

Increasing Latinx parent engagement in special education can affect the amount of related resources to which their children have access, thereby increasing their children's academic success and closing the achievement gap among special education Latinx students. This study draws on the bodies of literature on (a) special education, parents, and disproportionality; (b) Latinx parent involvement and students with disabilities; and (c) culturally responsive programs/strategies versus traditional parent engagement. In addition, the following framework was used to frame this study.

Theoretical Framework

In this research, I use critical race theory (CRT) and Community Cultural Wealth as theoretical frameworks to examine the experiences that affect Latinx parent engagement and advocacy in special education. CRT steers away from the notions of White, middle-class culture and shifts the research lens to focus on the lived experiences of people of color (Yosso, 2005). A CRT lens can explain how, despite the special education rhetoric of parental involvement, Latinx parents' voices continue to be silenced through the implementation of bureaucratic requirements that ignore Latinx parent knowledge and culture. CRT was introduced in the early 1970's and builds upon critical legal studies (CLS) and radical feminism (Delgado, 2017). CLS ideology is grounded in the work of Gramsci's notion of "hegemony" which describes the continued legitimacy of oppressive structures in American society (Ladson-Billings, 1995). While CLS scholarship has questioned the role of traditional legal systems that legitimize oppressive social

structures, it has done little to offer strategies for social change and transformation, as it has failed to incorporate race and racism into analyses of legal processes (Yosso, 2005). Early CRT scholars were committed to examining the relationships among race, racism, and power while challenging and disrupting racism and its associated social, legal, political, and educational consequences (Bell, 1995). Bell (1995) asserted that CRT is a form of scholarly resistance that strives for an egalitarian state of affairs by including the voices of those who are traditionally excluded and seeks to achieve all-inclusiveness as such voices value collective wisdom. CRT is comprised of the following five tenets:

- Counterstorytelling: Storytelling and counternarratives make visible the racial biases embedded in the norms of American culture and laws (Brown & Jackson, 2013). Storytelling serves as a powerful tool to unlearn beliefs that are commonly believed to be true.
- The permanence of racism: The permanence of racism is the assumption that racism is a normal part of American society and that White superiority is ingrained in political, legal, and educational structures (Brown & Jackson, 2013).
- Whiteness as property: Brown & Jackson (2013) contends that laws in the United States have protected settled expectations based on White privilege and thereby converted Whiteness into a valuable property interest that determines which legal disputes are argued and adjudicated. Whites accrue advantages and privilege based on the premise of being White (Leonardo, 2004).
- Interest convergence: Derrick Bell (1980) argues that the interest of achieving racial equality for Blacks will only be attained if it benefits the interest of Whites (Brown & Jackson, 2013).

- A critique of liberalism: CRT critiques liberal ideology, to include colorblindness and neutrality of the law. Many liberals believe in equal treatment for all persons, regardless of history (Delgado, 2017). The idea of colorblindness only reiterates racism because it liberates whites from feeling responsible for the hardships that people of color encounter in their everyday lives. Meritocracy continues to allocate power to those who already hold positions of wealth.

I apply these tenets to this study. CRT is useful as a theoretical framework for understanding how laws create and maintain the subordination of people of color, and it has also allowed education scholars to critique race and racism in education. By applying CRT's tenets in this study, I maintain CRT scholarship to understand how educational processes and structures can oppress and marginalize or emancipate and empower (Delgado Bernal, 2002), while considering the importance of understanding the intersectionality among race, culture, language, and disability for Latinx parents, which creates differential access to resources that promote educational opportunities for their children in special education. Historically, social hierarchies of power embedded within school systems influence how policies and practices are exercised (Parsons et al., 2018).

CRT challenges traditional claims of equal opportunity and objectivity and argues that these claims act as a camouflage for the self-interest, privilege, and power of dominant groups (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Colorblind ideologies normalize dominant ways of knowing, which creates an environment in which those unable to assimilate to the dominant culture will eventually fail (Parsons et al., 2018). Parent involvement, as it is currently defined, represents a systemic reality that contradicts against developing equal opportunity for parent involvement because it continues to maintain hierarchical racist paradigms that exist in our society.

In this study, I use Tara J. Yosso's (2005) *Community Cultural Wealth* as a theoretical framework for a community-based workshop geared toward increasing Latinx parent engagement and advocacy in special education. Rooted in critical race theory, *Community Cultural Wealth* expands on the resources and knowledge that students of color bring into the classroom. Drawing from critical race theory, Yosso (2005) offered a critique of and expanded on Bourdieu's (1997) notion of cultural capital, which maintains that generally affluent families have social mobility, which parents can transfer to their children to create generational social capital and reproduce the societal hierarchy (Guzmán et al., 2021). Bourdieu's theory of social capital maintains a deficit model because it places people of color at a disadvantage for not having the capital required to experience social mobility. Yosso (2005) further argued that Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital has been used to assert that some communities are culturally wealthy whereas others are culturally poor. Yosso (2005) posited that although Latino families may not have generational wealth and financial stability, they can pass on other types of social capital to their children (Guzmán et al., 2021)

Yosso (2005) highlighted people of color's experiences to reveal accumulated assets and resources in the history and lives of communities of color. Yosso (2005) posited six forms of capital that communities of color utilize to resist macro and micro forms of oppression:

- aspirational capital: This is the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future despite perceived barriers (Yosso, 2005)
- linguistic capital: This is the idea that students of color come to schools already equipped with intellectual and social capital they have gained through communication.

Additionally, Yosso (2005) acknowledged that students may have certain skills, such as

vocal tone, memorization, and volume, that are often associated with a variation of traditional storytelling that has been taught at home

- familial capital: This concept is associated with “cultural knowledges,” which family (kin) foster. This concept emphasizes the importance of maintaining a strong connection to community: “Our kin also model lessons of caring, coping and providing (educación), which inform our emotional, moral, educational, and occupational consciousness” (Yosso, 2005, p. 79).
- social capital: This refers to networks and community resources. It emphasizes the importance of social networks as an avenue for students of color to gain resources needed to obtain education, legal justice, employment, and health care (Yosso, 2005).
- navigational capital: This capital gives students of color the ability to traverse through institutions and the resilience they need to thrive in stressful events. “People of color draw on various social and psychological critical navigational skills to maneuver through structures of inequality permeated on racism” (Yosso, 2005, p. 80).
- resistant capital: This capital is grounded on behaviors, knowledge, and skills that are fostered to challenge inequality. “Parents of Color are consciously instructing their children to engage in behaviors and maintain attitudes that challenge the status quo” (Yosso, 2005, p. 81)

Latinx families face many barriers to their children’s pursuit of higher education, which are often connected to parental engagement and their ability to advocate for their children. The antideficit framework advances and fosters dialogic leadership that stems from Latinx schools, organizations, and spaces (Nava & Lara, 2016). I draw on Yosso’s (2005) *Community Cultural Wealth* as a theoretical framework to explore through each type of capital the strengths,

resistance, and resilience that Latinx families have in advocating for their children in special education so their children can gain access to educational equity and higher education. I build on the knowledge that the participants in this study already possess to build new knowledge from their engagement in the community-based workshop program to strengthen their advocacy and engagement in special education.

Parental involvement ought to be looked at critically because research links parental involvement with school readiness and achievement (Guzman, Fallin, & Goodkin, 2015). Omni and Winant (1994) argued that race is strategic and does ideological and political work. The special education system continues to embody inequities by adopting culturally dominant values, which leads to “colorblind” practices and policies that are used to conceptualize the lack of Latinx parent engagement and create a system that continues to exclude them. White middle-class cultural norms have become the dominant culture in the United States, but these often fail to acknowledge how minority parents may be active in their child’s education because they do not fit the norms set up by the institutions in power (Parsons, Walsermann, Jones, Knopf, & Blake, 2018).

Significance of the Study

It is important to continue to research Latinx parent participation in the special education process in order to advance the field of special education by understanding the intersectionality of multiple factors that affect parents’ advocacy and developing strategies to increase their knowledge and engagement and strengthen their participation. Parent involvement has always been considered central to a child’s educational achievement. Thus, identifying strategies that are tailored to the needs of Latinx parents can help with overcoming the barriers specific to their language, culture, and social class (Tejero Hughes et al., 2002). Araque et al. (2017) posited that

raising awareness among Latinx parents through parent-to-parent support networks would be a viable tool to help increase Latinx parents' awareness of the U.S. educational system and address the existing achievement gap among Latinx students. Encouraging parents to engage in critical reflection based on their lived experiences offers an opportunity to identify new knowledge that can improve parent engagement for future generations. Currently, the definition and expectations of parent engagement in special education fail to address the needs of parents with diverse cultural backgrounds and uphold majoritarian views that put them at a deficit by labeling Latinx parents as "parents that do not care" (Yosso, 2006). Continuing to see Latinx parent engagement from a deficit lens maintains the idea that Latinx parents' lack of involvement is to blame for their children's lack of academic achievement. Existing literature examines the barriers for Latinx parent engagement in special education, but fewer studies are available that examine parents' own strengths and preferred methods for engagement and participation. This study not only has the potential to increase Latinx parents' leadership in special education but also can become an educational tool to increase Latinx parents' knowledge of the special education process, improve service delivery in school systems, and advance education, by providing schools with culturally responsive interventions to utilize in IEP meetings that can develop into positive partnerships with which to support the academic achievement of Latinx special education students.

Background and Need

Historically, the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA, 2004) has emphasized the importance of parent participation in making educational decisions for children with disabilities. The IDEA's assumption that all parents have an equal understanding of special education laws, mandates, and resources to make decisions about their child's special education creates a fixed

legal framework that ignores the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse families. This affects the experiences of Latinx parents when they navigate the special education system, and instead of becoming active participants, they become passive recipients of information, which influences their child's education. Parents who are linguistically, culturally, and socioeconomically diverse value education in similar ways to their middle- and upper-class counterparts. However, due to the power differences Latinx parents and educational experts, the former, are likely to rely on teachers for educational decision-making and on kinship connections to solve school-related problems (Trainor, 2010). Latinx parents view education as a vehicle for social mobility to move their children out of poverty, and their desire to provide their children with better life accounts for the sacrifices they often make (Delgado-Gaitan, 2007). Given the barriers that Latinx parents face in special education, they may seek advocacy-training programs for themselves or work with a special education advocate to ensure their child is receiving appropriate services in the least restrictive environment (Burke et al., 2016). According to Burke and Sandman (2017), special education advocacy programs have increased in number across the United States. Advocacy programs designed for Latinx parents may enable them to become active participants in IEP meetings and advocate for appropriate services (Burke et al., 2018). As it stands, the current meaning of parent participation in special education ought to be reconceptualized to account for cultural values that may affect the meaning of parent involvement and advocacy. The fixed legal framework creates systemic barriers for Latinx parents that influence their children's educational experiences.

Tejero-Hughes et al. (2002) argued that it is important for school professionals to understand the social contexts, perceptions, and beliefs of families with children in special education. Therefore, they conducted a study with 44 Latinx families, of which 16 were selected

as a representative subgroup of the families, to better understand their perceptions of their participation and how schools reached out to them. The participants in this study spoke little to no English and had children with different types of disabilities, whose grade level varied from prekindergarten through fifth grade. The overall results of their study showed that the parents were satisfied with their own level of involvement and their child's special education plan. However, a quarter of the families felt that they wanted more communication from the schools in a way that they could understand. The parents stated that they wanted more training on ways to assist their child's education; moreover, they thought that their child had not made appropriate academic progress. This study is important for two reasons. First, it suggests the importance of incorporating parents into the discussion of what tools they need to be more involved in their child's special education. It calls for school districts and professionals to create programs or interventions that build on the knowledge and cultural needs of the families they serve. Secondly, it challenges the negative stereotypes that Latinx parents do not care because they are not involved. The study participants stated that they wanted specific suggestions on ways to support their child's education. This study suggests that addressing these two areas would increase the likelihood of parents increasing their participation. Similar studies have found that some parents may find it difficult to advocate on behalf of their children due to a lack of understanding about the efficacy of services and perceived inadequacy in IEP meetings (Burke et al., 2016).

Aceves (2014) conducted a qualitative study to evaluate the effectiveness of a special education parent-training program for Latinx families with children with disabilities. Over a 2-month period, they conducted six workshops to increase parents' understanding of special education services, programs, and support. Self-reports from the parents demonstrated that the parents gained an understanding of school services and community resources. The results of this

study are consistent with existing research demonstrating that programs designed to provide advocacy training directly to Latinx parents increase their knowledge and understanding of special education services, support, and access to community resources. This study supports the findings from Tejero-Hughes et al. (2002) suggesting that parents having the appropriate access to tools and information likely will have increased advocacy and involvement in schools. The findings of Aceves (2014) suggest that community agencies that collaborate with Latinx parents by providing access to knowledge through training programs are key to increasing Latinx parents' knowledge of special education. They further suggested that in order to increase Latinx parent participation, schools must understand how to effectively support parents.

In a qualitative study, Mueller et al. (2009) examined the experiences of Latinx mothers in a support group and compared their outcomes to those gained from what the researchers identified as parents from "mainstream cultures" (p. 114). In this 3-year longitudinal study, 12 families participated for all 3 years, six participated for 2 years, and six participated only for 1 year. All of the families had children in special education, whose ages ranged from 4 to 16 years old. Their findings suggest that support groups for Latinx mothers showed increased benefits in three areas: the participants felt like a family, had a source of information, and received emotional support. The researchers posited that although many studies have been conducted to identify the benefits of support groups, little such research has been done on the benefits of support groups for culturally diverse parents. Furthermore, "Although there are many parent-to-parent programs available, it is unclear as to how many are available to parents who represent culturally and linguistically diverse cultures" (p. 119). Lastly, the researchers called for future studies to provide parents with relevant information about special education because this likely will increase their level of involvement.

A growing number of studies have examined the barriers affecting Latinx parent participation in special education (e.g., Aceves, 2014; Tejero-Hughes et al., 2002; Mueller et al., 2009). This research study is important because it builds upon the evidence base of previous studies stating that culturally relevant parent-support programs are important for Latinx parents to build community, provide emotional support, and build upon parents' existing knowledge based on lived experiences. Such programs do so by allowing them to center their voices in the research through their narratives and shared lived experiences and by providing an opportunity for them to advocate for the knowledge they want access to as part of the workshop, which then empowers them to increase their leadership and advocacy skills. By centering their voices in this study, the participants provide a greater understanding of the development and delivery of tools needed from schools, to increase their participation in developing their child's special education process. Lian et al. (2001) emphasized the importance of parent-involvement programs being interactive and not solely relying on reading materials and information.

Given the findings from the research reviewed, this research study focused on Latinx parent involvement in special education, can illuminate ways to improve the collaboration and communication between Latinx parents and schools and can better prepare Latinx parents to support and engage in the development of their child's special education. The study addresses the current research gap addressed by Mueller et al. (2009), regarding research investigating how to increase Latinx parents' involvement in special education by giving them tools to increase their knowledge. The workshops in this study are tailored to Latinx families with children in special education, to provide them with basic knowledge on the IEP process, their rights, and ways for them to collaborate further with schools. This will provide them with the necessary skills to participate in a culture that is often full of legal jargon, which hinders them from

becoming active participants, instead of relegating Latinx parents to passive roles, which affects their children's access to services and educational progress. With the workshops, the participants will be able to engage more actively in IEP meetings, be aware of what information to expect in those meetings and be informed about what services are available to assist with their children's academic progress in special education.

Participation in IEP Development

For parents to participate actively in IEP meetings, they need to feel welcomed and valued by school personnel. If parents choose to separate themselves from the IEP process and participation, then it is often believed that the parents do not place value on their children's education, when in fact their disengagement may be due to the growing feelings of being overwhelmed by a bureaucratic system that creates mistrust (Larios & Zetlin, 2012).

Additionally, Latinx parents may play a passive role in IEP meetings because they perceive teachers and other professionals as experts. Because Latinx parents highly respect teachers, they may leave their children's educational progress for teachers to dictate while viewing their roles as important in the areas of social and moral development (Langdon, 2009). Wolfe and Duran (2013) stated that many studies (e.g., Hughes et al., 2002; Lo, 2008) have demonstrated that parents often report not feeling ready for an IEP meeting because they have little awareness of its purpose and the purpose of the meeting structure. The workshop in this study addresses this concern by providing parents with an overview of an IEP. The workshop provided the parents with research-based information on ways in which to prepare for IEP meetings to help them ask questions, identify resources, and understand the meaning of their rights so they can effectively enforce them to access related services to assist their children in progressing academically.

Attitudes Towards School Professionals and Communication

This study offers insights into Latinx parents' perceptions and can help school administrators and policymakers to implement culturally responsive interventions to maintain and/or increase relationships with Latinx families. If in fact parent participation affects student outcomes, then it is imperative for home-school partnerships to increase and for parents of diverse backgrounds to participate (Lynch & Stein, 1987). This study has the potential to provide parents with specific tools to identify their IEP team members so they can communicate with each team member accordingly. In addition, the workshop gave the parents the opportunity to share ideas about tools they have identified as effective and give them results in establishing communication with school personnel.

Cultural Responsiveness

Culturally responsive pedagogy is defined as the practice of strategies that directly address the differences between people's cultural, linguistic, and experiential backgrounds (Robinson, 2016). The core element of this study is to center the voices of Latinx parents by giving them resources to help them build agency and become active partners in their children's IEP teams. It is important to include parents' voices and knowledge because they are the primary sources of information who can shed light on their children's behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes that are necessary to engage them in school (Salas et al., 2005). By building on their existing knowledge, the participants in this study were given an opportunity to practice leadership skills among their peers and practice the skills they have learned so they can apply them in IEP meetings. By providing parents an opportunity for their culture and experiences to be valued, this

study provides parents with an opportunity to learn and develop, while providing them access to programs and resources to advocate on the behalf of their children.

Definition of Terms

Key terms must be defined to understand the purpose of this study and the complexities that influence Latinx parent participation and advocacy in special education. The following key terms are central to this study:

1. **culturally responsive:** the concept that professional practices are informed by others; that diverse backgrounds, lived experiences, and cultural identities are nurtured; and that social justice is promoted by identifying systems of privilege and marginalization in order to bridge cultural divides (Peters et al., 2020). Murff (2020) posited that culturally responsive interventions celebrate cultural diversity and focus on making cultural backgrounds a focal point for teaching and learning. Culturally responsive interventions are a process in which teachers and professionals take steps to develop self-reflection about their biases and beliefs systems
2. **individualized education program (IEP):** a legally binding document between the school district, parent/guardian, and a student. The goals of the IEP document are to identify a student's disability, provide measurable goals, and identify available educational services and accommodation to assist a student (Ball et al., 2018).
3. **IEP team:** a group of professionals who monitor and implement the goals identified in the IEP and review the outcomes of the services provided. The team comprises, but is not limited to, the school administrator, general education teachers, special education teachers, speech therapists, occupational therapists, nurses, and mental health providers (Ball et al., 2018).

4. **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):** an act that was first passed in 1985. Its main goal is for schools to provide free and appropriate education (FAPE) to special education students. Students who are suspected of having a disability must be evaluated. Once a student has been found to have an eligible and qualifying disability, the school then must provide the student with special education and related services (Turnage, 2020).
5. **majoritarian narratives:** a form of storytelling from the perspectives of individuals who have social and racial privilege used to perpetuate stereotypes (Yosso, 2006).
6. **parent engagement:** constituted on the notion that parents and the school share a responsibility for the student's educational outcomes. The collaborative relationship between the school and parents calls for schools and other organizations to engage parents in ways that are meaningful in order to engage in decision-making, and parents are expected to support the development of their children's education by advocating through school processes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012).
7. **parent involvement:** emphasizes the parents' ability to participate in activities that schools initiate and structure (Fenton et al., 2017). It represents behaviors and actions in which parents engage to benefit their children's education (Marchand et al., 2019).
8. **parent rights:** Under IDEA, parents have educational rights, which are often referred to as procedural safeguards. These safeguards provide parents the opportunity to engage in decision-making meetings about their children's special education and in IEP meetings (California Department of Education, 2020).
9. **culturally responsive:** Murff (2020), posits that Culturally Responsive interventions celebrate multicultural diversity and focused on making cultural backgrounds a focal

point for teaching and learning. It is the process in which teachers and/or professionals take steps to develop self-reflection about their own biases and beliefs systems.

10. **Latinx:** The term Latinx is used to be more inclusive and disrupt traditional binary notions of gender (Salinas, 2020). The term Latinx is used throughout this research study to acknowledge gender diversity within this population.

Summary

Each of the studies reviewed in this section are important for understanding the experiences of Latinx parents in special education and ways to increase their sense of agency and participation in special education to assist their children with disabilities to make educational progress. The studies offer a strong suggestion that parents remain consistently dissatisfied with the types of resources their children have in making educational progress. Few studies have examined how parents' participation and sense of agency increase in IEP meetings by providing them with tools that increase their participation through community support programs. This study attempts to address this gap in the research by examining Latinx parents' experiences of the special education process to identify and explore culturally responsive interventions that can increase parents' participation and advocacy for their children with disabilities. In Chapter 2, an overview of the literature review is covered to add a comprehensive understanding of Latinx parents' experiences in special education through a social justice lens.

CHAPTER II

The Review of the Literature

Over time, Latinxs have become one of the largest minority groups in the United States. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2019), the reports demonstrate that the Latinx population was 60,572,237, with a population growth of 20% since 2010. Latinx students have the highest dropout rates, widening the educational achievement gap that is often attributed to the barriers Latinx parents face in supporting the educational achievement of their children (Araque et al., 2017). The number of students in special education has continued to grow at a disproportionate rate that it has driven much attention to demands for policy changes to disrupt the dynamics that contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline (Mahon-Reynolds & Parker, 2016). Fenton et al. (2017) argued that to address the racial inequities minority groups face in education, educators not only need to pay attention to what happens in the classroom but also shift how they engage parents of marginalized students in meaningful collaboration by placing value on their existing knowledge and acknowledging the social and cultural barriers that parents face. This literature review includes a discussion to support shifting the burden away from Latinx parents whose children achieve low academic success in special education due to the perceived lack of parental engagement with ideological policies and practices that are culturally irrelevant for Latinx parents. In addition, the literature review will discuss the role community-based parent support groups have in increasing Latinx parent advocacy to bridge the gap that currently exists in home-school collaborative partnerships to support their children's special education.

This literature review provides an in-depth background to barriers that are unique to Latinx parents in special education and that affect their advocacy and engagement on behalf of their children. This literature review is organized along the following major themes: (a) special

education, parents, and disproportionality; (b) Latinx parent involvement and students with disabilities; and (c) culturally responsive programs and strategies versus traditional parent engagement.

Special Education, Parents & Disproportionality

Parent involvement has been linked to successful student learning outcomes when a full working partnership has been formed between the home and school environments. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004) identifies parents as equal, active partners in their child's special education team, and it fully supports parents by stating that they have the right to be involved in the decision-making regarding their child's supportive services and special education. The IDEA emphasizes the importance of strengthening the role of parents as active participants in the development of their child's special education process, as their ability to advocate for their child can lead to an improvement in the child's education and in the quality of the educational services that he or she is likely to have access to (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 [IDEA], 2004). Kalyanpur, Harry, and Skrtic (2000) supported the IDEA's call for support to strengthen parent participation and further suggested that parents' knowledge of their children should be viewed as a valuable tool for professionals when decisions are made regarding the most appropriate education for children with disabilities. Furthermore, they emphasized the importance of professionals' informing parents of their rights, as well as these professionals' continued communication with parents regarding changes in their children's individual education plans (IEPs) or the changes being considered in school placements.

Because parent involvement has been linked to student academic success, Latinx parent involvement in education has become an area of interest in research due to the vast differences in

educational achievement between Latinx students and students from other ethnic backgrounds (Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2011). Lian and Fontanez-Phelan (2001) argued that the lack of supportive services available to parents who are linguistically and culturally diverse may be linked to higher truancy, dropout, academic failure, and the overrepresentation of students of color in special education. Aceves (2014) maintained Lian and Fontanez-Phelan's (2001) argument and suggested that parents are faced with multiple systemic barriers in the special education process that impact the way in which they advocate for their children and impede them from engaging in meaningful participation in the development of their children's IEPs, which can shape their children's educational experiences. Furthermore, in her research, Aceves (2014) identified the following areas as barriers that impact parent participation: 1) poor communication with professionals, 2) deficit views of families, 3) cultural differences regarding disability and parent-professional involvement, and 4) limited knowledge about and access to appropriate special education services. Kalyanpur, Harry, and Skrtic (2000) argued that Latinx parents are faced with an additional layer of systemic barriers that are unique to their own cultural, ethnic, and economic experiences. The barriers identified in their study are the following: 1) limited English fluency, 2) a limited understanding of the special education system, 3) a lack of access to transportation and childcare, and 4) schools' limited culturally responsive practices that impact collaboration with Latinx parents. Parents involved in the special education system are participating in a process characterized by a hierarchy, where importance is placed on professionals and their opinions. Parents often may not want to challenge school authorities out of culturally embedded respect for authority. Instead, they may withdraw from the process altogether.

To date, limited research data are available with regard to the longitudinal impacts that parent-to-parent support groups have on Latinx parents' advocacy skills in special education. Burke (2017) emphasized the importance of understanding empowerment, advocacy, and school-family partnerships among Latinx parents. She posited in her study that increased empowerment and stronger school-family partnerships lead to increased student achievement. I aim to examine the literature on parental involvement, advocacy, and self-efficacy, highlighting the equity issues that parents face in special education. I use current research in this area to highlight the ways in which our current special education system continues to reflect the social inequities that exist for Latinx parents in our society. I also examine how this impacts their ability to be active participants and to advocate for their children and the quality of the education they have in special education.

The traditional Western definition of parent participation often ignores the ways in which culturally diverse parents participate in their child's education, as it may defer from the normative understanding of parental involvement in school and education. I propose that to increase parent self-efficacy and advocacy in the special education process, parent-to-parent support groups should use culturally responsive interventions to strengthen their advocacy skills. This involves the combination of community building, shared cultural experiences, and building on the existing knowledge that parents have to better address barriers that impact their participation.

Latinx and The Demographic Imperatives

Latinxs are one of the fastest-growing minority groups in the United States (US). As a result, there has been an increase in Latinx students requiring special education services. Attention has been drawn to the growing reports and concerns over the overrepresentation and

misidentification of Latinx students in special education. The overrepresentation and over-identification of Latinx students in special education are growing concerns in our education system, as they have widened the academic achievement gap that exists for students of color. A disproportionate number of racial, ethnic, and linguistically diverse students are consistently identified as having learning disabilities. They are thus referred to and then placed in special education (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2013). Although special education law protects the rights that parents have as their child's best advocate, Latinx parents face a plethora of challenges that impact their involvement in the development and process of their child's IEP. Latinx parents face systemic barriers that are unique to their cultural needs, levels of acculturation, and the linguistic barriers that impact how they advocate for the educational support and services that their child in special education may require to access quality and appropriate education.

Race, Culture and Special Education

The intersectionality that lies between race and disability has resulted in a vast number of students of color, particularly Black and Latinx males, being placed in segregated classroom through sorting practices, such as tracking as well as the disability labels of mental retardation and/or emotional disturbance (Erevelle & Minear, 2010). Although legal mandates in special education made it possible for special education students to access their education in the least restrictive setting possible (i.e., general education classroom), identification practices became a way in which to ensure that these students were not in the same classroom and were placed in segregated settings away from the general education population (Blanchett, 2010). The disproportionality that exists in our school system widens the achievement gap and impacts access to quality and appropriate education for students of color in special education. It reflects the historical legacy of racism that exists in the United States (Connor, 2017). Based on the

subjective judgement of teachers, psychologists, and administrators, students are diagnosed with emotional and behavioral disorders, as well as intellectual and learning disabilities. This subjective judgment has resulted in the over-identification of students of color for these categories (VanderPyl, 2018). Students of color are often taught that their own communities have little expertise to offer when it comes to their academics, whereas White students are taught to place value in their communities and to see them as primary sources of knowledge (Annamma & Morrison, 2018). From birth, children in groups whose communities have been linked to higher social capital have a distinctive advantage over students whose cultural capital, which may be beneficial in their own social networks, may not have the same exchange of value within school institutions (Gordon & Nocon, 2008).

Fierros (2006) argued that although special education was designed based on the premise of meeting the educational needs of students with disabilities, it has evolved into a system that maintains and perpetuates the marginalization of students of color based on their intersectional identities of race and disability. Consequently, students experience placements in segregated settings at a disproportionate rate that U.S. legal and social institutions maintain. Similarly to institutional racism, institutional ableism is best described by bigoted practices that people with disabilities experience based on policies and practices that put them at a disadvantage based on their abilities. Despite educational reforms, students from linguistically and ethnically diverse backgrounds continue to represent a large percentage of students placed in special education. In recent years, the field of special education has been criticized and has been placed under scrutiny due to the overrepresentation of students of color in special education with identifiable disability categories. A growing number of scholars in special education have challenged the current medical framework that defines disability as a deficit, and they push for the conceptualization of

disability from a social and cultural framework to highlight the need to address the issue of racial overrepresentation in disability categories (Connor & Ferri, 2005). However, to maintain normative and dominant practices, traditional scholars have contested the call to move away from the current medical model framework that dictates the field of education by either downplaying or ignoring the issue of race. Hehir (2002) offered multiple narratives of people with disabilities and their families, in which they described how most of their school experiences focused on ways in which to overcome or change a child's disability to conform the child to what is identified as "normal" in schools. These types of children are denied educational opportunities and experiences that people without disabilities take for granted. This reflects the type of emotional violence that parents and students with disabilities endure, as their disabilities are often viewed as something negative, and "overcoming it" is the only valued result.

Latinx Parent Involvement and Students with Disabilities

Traditionally, the parents' ability to help their child at home with school work and other educational activities compromises parent involvement. Moreover, parents are identified as being involved if they have the ability to participate in the decision-making process of their child's education (Gordon & Nocon, 2008). Past research on Latinx parent involvement has emphasized the importance of placing value on the family's culture and language, as well as identifying their life experiences to support the child's education (Galindo & Medina, 2009). Despite stereotypes that Latinx parents are not interested in their child's education, Latinxs are motivated to be involved in the decision-making process of their child's education, as they view education as a form of social and economic mobility for their children (Burke, 2017; Hughes et al., 2008).

Galindo and Medina (2009) argued that the traditional definition of parent involvement contributes to the deficit view of Latinx parent involvement and perpetuates the use of the

practices of exclusion that alienate parents and students of color. La Educacion (Education) for Latinx parents is composed of both the formal education that takes place in the classroom and the moral upbringing that takes place in the home that shapes the child's life experience. Parental agency is guided by reaffirming the importance of education while also reminding the children of the contributions of Latinx culture to their educational careers. Walker et al. (2011) in their research suggested that the attitudes and behaviors of school staff often dictate Latinx parents' levels of involvement and whether they perceive the school environment as welcoming. To increase the likelihood of a positive home-school partnership, schools need to invest time in making sure that parents feel like they are valued members of the school community and valued participants in the decision-making process of their child's education. Schools operate based on the principle that parent participation is a collaborative relationship in which parents have the legal right to choose from a range of supportive services and to identify the best educational option available for children in special education. Working under this assumption, schools often fail to acknowledge the cultural underpinnings that impact participation from Latinx parents. Working under the normative views of parent participation automatically leaves out parents who do not subscribe to these values. Parents who do not ascribe to these normative values are often seen as a "problem" or often labeled as parents who do not care.

Latinx Parent Participation in the Special Education Process

Salas (2004) conducted a study in which she examined the experiences of Mexican-American parents in the special education system, specifically during IEP meetings. Themes that emerged from her analysis showed that the mothers involved in this study felt that they were not heard, and when they were, they felt ignored and disrespected. The mothers in this study perceived the special education system as something that was hurtful but that they had to endure

in the best interests of their children to receive adequate services. Salas (2004) also noted that during meetings, school professionals used legal jargon as a tool of dominance over parents, which resulted in parents' having limited opportunities to participate in IEP meetings.

Latinx parents face many systemic barriers that are unique to their culture and levels of acculturation, which may impact how they participate in their child's multidisciplinary team.

In their study, Larios and Zetlin (2012) identified eight factors that contribute to less involvement and participation in special education by Latinx parents: (a) lower levels of involvement compared with White counterparts; (b) limited knowledge of special education procedures and available services; (c) perceived helplessness that impacts their confidence and self-efficacy; (d) becoming easily overwhelmed by life circumstances; (e) limited access to transportation and childcare; (f) culturally based assumptions of noninterference on the part of parents in school matters; and (g) school professionals' implicit or explicit discouragement of parents' participation in the special education process. These barriers are telling because they inhibit authentic parental participation for Latinx parents. Given the complexities related to the systematic barriers and limited access to school resources, Latinx parents are likely to be excluded and to continue to be further marginalized during this complex process.

Latinx Parents and Teachers

Family experiences are identified as critical in determining successful outcomes in special education (Yeh, Forness, Ho, McCabe, & Hough, 2004). Parents of children in special education identified having a child with a disability as a unique parenting experience, as this can have an impact on every family member who can be a source of ongoing stress and disrupt the family's routine (Hughes, Valle-Reistra, & Arguelles, 200). The impact of this deficit model is specially heightened with families from culturally and economically diverse backgrounds

because the culture in itself can be seen as faulty (Kalyanpur et al., 2000). The danger that deficit thinking poses for students with disabilities of color, particularly those of low socioeconomic statuses, is that schools often attribute their failure in school to their families because they must have deficits, or defects that thwarted the students' learning processes (Valencia & Black, 2002). Although Latinx parents want to be involved in their child's education, these overt and covert messages indicate to parents that their opinions and voices are not always welcomed or valued. This often leaves them silenced and marginalized (Hughes, Martinez Valles, & Arguelles, 2008).

Larios and Zetling (2012) posited the need to build positive home-school partnerships as a tool for preventing adversarial experiences for the families of children in special education. Hernández-Saca (2018) further explained the important role that the teacher plays in a child's special education experience. It is critical for teachers to interrogate their own emotions, feelings, and affects—the expressions of their emotions and feelings—within schooling contexts, as they have the power to afford and constrain students' opportunities to learn as well as to construct social reality and influence students' educational trajectories in school systems. Teachers' emotions and affects are filtered not only through the teachers' personal and professional belief systems, expectations, and habits but also through deficit-oriented, cultural, master narratives about historically marginalized communities.

The American school system operates based on the social construct of independence, which presumes that for a child to be successful, despite his or her abilities, a marker for success and achievement is working in the least restrictive environment with as little support as possible. Familismo is a fundamental cultural value for Latinx parents, where they feel a sense of responsibility and solidarity toward each of the family members. This calls for the need for a collaborative relationship between teachers and Latinx parents. Latinx parents need to feel

welcome and respected to build trust with teachers and administrators. Parents may have a difficult time with engaging in a process that they feel is not appropriate to their cultural values. This emphasizes the importance of administrators' and teachers' being culturally responsive to the needs and strengths of the family. Failure to acknowledge culturally and linguistically diverse issues may lead to assumptions that not only hurt the collaboration between school staff and parents but also potentially lead to parents' feeling as though they are not appreciated or respected by their child's educational team, which creates a bigger institutional barrier for Latinx parents. An examination of cultural perspectives in engaging Latinx parents could benefit teachers and other professionals as they critically assess the goals and effectiveness of programs.

Latinx parents are often identified as the "problem" when it comes to participation in special education. However, perhaps the problem can be traced to policies that protect and give teachers the most control in the education processes of children in special education, creating an unbalanced power dynamic that pins teachers against parents. Latinx parents are often viewed from a deficit perspective when it comes to participation and advocacy in special education. Perhaps the problem is not the parents; rather, the problem lies within the educational institutions that have created a system of oppression in special education. This system gives teachers and other professionals the most control and authority to make recommendations and placement decisions that policies and practices protect. These policies essentially pin teachers against parents.

Advocacy and Parent Involvement

Burker (2017) argued that Latinxs face different barriers that impact their levels of advocacy, such as limited language proficiency, a lack of knowledge about resources, and immigration status. Cultural differences regarding how Latinx parents view disabilities play a

pivotal role in parents' levels of advocacy, as they may come from countries where the institutionalization of individuals with disabilities is common compared with the U.S. educational system, where value is placed on inclusive education.

Veas et al. (2019) posited that many Latinx parents, particularly first-generation Latinxs, were not educated in the U.S. school system, and their limited understanding of the educational system may impact how they participate or even what questions to ask to become more knowledgeable. According to Aceves (2014), to enhance parents' advocacy skills, programs should focus on strengthening the following areas: (a) understanding the child's disability and effective interventions for supporting his or her progress; (b) identifying important members of the multidisciplinary team; (c) being knowledgeable of parental rights and responsibilities; and (d) having effective communication skills with professionals.

Consistent with other research suggestions, Burke (2018) maintained findings from other research in which she posited that advocacy programs tailored to Latinx parents are likely to increase their participation in IEP meetings and their ability to advocate for their children with disabilities. She argued that increasing participation alone is not enough. Programs ought to increase the level of advocacy skills during meetings to fully embrace the definition of parent participation that the IDEA has set. To navigate a system with which they are unfamiliar, Latinx parents may be deliberate with the way in which they choose to engage with their child's school without becoming confrontational. This may make them appear as less assertive, with them relying on school professionals to make educational decisions. All research is consistent with the importance of building community amongst parents to build a greater sense of self-efficacy so as to increase engagement and advocacy. This results in a positive impact on academic achievement and access to supportive services for their children in special education. Increasing parents' sense

of advocacy and engagement challenges the stereotypes that Latinx parents are not invested in their child's education and therefore do not participate. Yosso (2005) referred to this as *resistant capital*, where knowledge and skills are promoted through oppositional behaviors that challenge inequalities. This form of cultural wealth is grounded in resistance to subordination exhibited by communities of color. Although the IDEA emphasizes parents' participation in the development and decision-making process of their children's IEPs, the current system upholds hegemony practices that fail to recognize the unique barriers that culturally diverse families experience when navigating a system that is not designed to meet their needs.

Culturally Responsive Programs

Identifying the barriers that Latinx parents face as members of a multidisciplinary team in the special education system is essential for increasing awareness and re-thinking engagement strategies to increase participation and advocacy. The integration of cultural variables in working with Latinx families is stressed throughout literature and is needed for a paradigm shift. When it comes to improving the quality of the special education supports available to students of color, parent participation alone will not be able to achieve this. To improve special education service delivery for students of color, parents need to develop self-efficacy through advocacy and the knowledge of their rights under the IDEA. Given the complexities that are embedded in the special education system, special education advocacy support programs are becoming increasingly common. However, only a few programs are available in Spanish for monolingual Latinx parents (Burke, Rios, Lopez, & Garcia, 2018).

With this in mind, parent advocacy programs need to deliver services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate and that are aimed at building empowerment in Latinx communities. The literature calls for an integrated model in which advocacy is taught within a

culturally sensitive format, and a model that emphasizes the importance of relationship and community development. Building a community of advocates will not only empower parents but also build knowledge within this community. Support is a useful tool for enhancing advocacy among Latinx parents, as it provides them with a collective experience for finding support in community members with whom they feel validated, as they may identify with some of the challenges they have faced in having a child with a disability, and thus, they may reduce the level of stress that each member experiences (Cohen, 2013). Participating in advocacy programs, parents will not only gain knowledge but they will also acquire the tools needed to communicate with teachers, develop a better understanding of IEPs, and learn how to support the social and emotional development of their child and consequently increase his or her academic success.

Parent-school partnerships are important for a child's special education development. However, the process of participating in meetings and fully being active participants in the process can be an overwhelming task for parents. Researchers interested in working with families to promote parent-school partnerships have identified family support as an effective solution. Familial support is likely to facilitate autonomy, a sense of inclusion, care, and satisfaction with quality of life and well-being for children with disabilities (Mueller, Milian, & Islas Lopez, 2009). The use of testimonials allows for Latinx families to share their lived experiences and to expose the racial and cultural bias that creates educational barriers. Through the use of testimonials, researchers, institutions, and educators can learn about the changes that need to happen to accommodate the needs of Latinx parents.

Research is consistent with the claims that Latinx parents place an important emphasis on education. However, they face many barriers that impede them from successfully being advocates for their child. Cultural values need to be at the core of the content development of

parent-to-parent support programs for a support program to meet the needs of the family. It is important to note that programs designed to work with Latinx parents use Latinx cultural values as a standard for parent training. Culturally informed and responsive programs are likely to create a valuable collective experience for Latinx parents, thereby increasing the possibility of long-term outcomes (Calzada, 2010).

Summary

I started out with a brief overview of the overrepresentation of Latinx students in special education, followed by the systematic barriers that Latinx parents may come across when it comes to participating in the development of their child's special education process. I discussed the ways in which normative views of parent participation automatically disregard the cultural values to which diverse parents may not ascribe. Then, I argued the need to shift paradigms that put Latinx parents at a deficit and that decolonize the ways in which schools expect parents to participate and advocate for their children in special education. Typical parent involvement and expectations of advocacy only continue to marginalize racial minority parents, whereas it continues to create pathways of access to dominant White and middle-class parents. By failing to acknowledge cultural differences, schools are contributing to the deficit perspectives that continue to widen the achievement gap for students in special education. This gap can often cause children of color to be placed in more restrictive settings that result in only more of an educational deficit.

I argue that using culturally responsive interventions in parent-to-parent support advocacy groups is a way in which to counterbalance the mandates that put Latinx parents at a disadvantage when it comes to parent participation in special education. Often their non-normative ways of parent participation are met with resistance from schools and providers, who

often are not able to understand the cultural differences that impact their practices and collaboration. Through programs that acknowledge Latinx cultural and family values, Latinx parents have a greater chance to build agency, self-efficacy, and advocacy to navigate a system that continues to exclude them and their children.

Chapter 3 provides information about the research methodology I used to obtain the data needed for this dissertation, which includes where I collected the data, the research participants' demographics, instruments used for data collection, data analysis, and a summary of the methodology.

CHAPTER III

Methods

School personnel often see Latinx parents as less involved when evaluating their participation through traditional lenses. These normative standards are often based on Eurocentric models that uphold White middle-class parents' practices as the standard for successful parent involvement (Yull et al., 2014). Although special education law emphasizes parents' rights as active partners in decision-making, the current systemic barriers demonstrate the persistent marginalization of Latinx parents. This persistent marginalization results in disproportionately negative educational outcomes for their children

This case study examines Latinx parents' experiences navigating the special education process to identify and explore culturally responsive interventions that can increase parent participation and advocacy for their children with disabilities. By examining the shared experiences of Latinx parents, their actions, perceptions, and responses point to how their level of advocacy and understanding of the US special education system influences the development of their child's IEP. This study contributes to understanding cultural norms and practices that influence Latinx parent engagement. This knowledge can inform practices, policy change, and research while providing a foundation for understanding the unique experiences of Latinx parents within the special education system.

Therefore, I propose the following questions for my research:

1. In what ways does a community-based workshop program for Latinx parents increase their IEP advocacy knowledge?
 - 1a. How can a parent-to-parent community-based workshop program provide support to Latinx parents in special education?
2. What are parents' perceptions of how they are included in the special education process of referral, evaluation, placement, and education planning?

2a. How do parents' perceptions of school implementation of IEP services and practices impact parent involvement?

2b. What perceptions do Latinx parents have of the ways that schools structure opportunities for engagement for them and their children?

Research Design

Researchers conduct qualitative research to understand the constructed knowledge and meanings that people create to make sense of their lived experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research is designed to make sense of an observed object in a specific context rather than forming generalizations based on a sample population (Johnson et al., 2018). A case study is a particular type of qualitative research design (Taylor et al., 2017) that includes in-depth examinations and is often chosen because of its unique characteristics, which facilitates focused studies (Saldana, 2011).

In this research, I used a case study design to study a group of Latinx mothers participating in a community support program to understand their experiences within the special education system and the cultural factors that influence their level of advocacy for their children with disabilities. This study provides an in-depth focus on these participants. My choice of a case study for this research was driven by the notion that case studies provide in-depth analysis and investigation of a subject and its relationship to its real-life context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 37). By focusing on this group of mothers, I provide an in-depth description of how culture directly influences Latinx parents' roles and participation levels in developing their children's special education plans. According to Merriam (1998), insights and data from case studies can be used to recommend a course of action, policy change, and practice

Data Collection

The data for this study was gathered through participant observation during a series of eight workshops I co-facilitated for Latinx mothers with children in special education that live in the Bay Area. I co-facilitated with one of the Latinx mothers in the group, who is also a parent coordinator. Participant observation methodology is widely used by social scientists when the researcher aims to gain close familiarity with a specific group of people and their practices, life routines, or culture over an extended period of time (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). Participant observation allows for the in-depth exploration of how people engage in daily activities and describe and structure their world (Creswell & Creswell, 2020). To understand the meaning attributed to life events or specific phenomena, the researcher must immerse themselves in a setting or become part of the investigated group (Iacono et al., 2009).

Setting

Due to health regulations and mandatory shelter-in-place orders related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the study took place virtually via Zoom. The study sample was taken from a group of mothers who regularly attend a virtual community support group through a nonprofit agency, *Sueños*¹, dedicated to providing social services to youth, families, and farm workers in the Bay Area. This Latinx-centered nonprofit agency developed as a grassroots program to honor the cultural strengths of the Latinx community. The agency is committed to helping Latinx families by providing mental health services, wraparound case management, immigration support, and social justice advocacy. The founder of this nonprofit agency has a doctoral degree in education and is a licensed clinical social worker. Her clinical work centers on child trauma and Latinx mental health. Her commitment to social justice advocacy centers on her clinical mental health

¹ Pseudonym.

work with families and her current research, which focuses on understanding the traumatic experiences that impact undocumented and mixed-status Latinx youth.

Participants

At the time of this case study, all of the participants resided in a small city in the Bay Area, identified as female, were between the ages of 30-50 years old, and described themselves as Latinas of Mexican and Central American descent. Three participants were stay-at-home mothers, two owned a cake baking business, one was a housekeeper, and one worked in an office as an admin. This study's research population was confirmed as relevant by collaborating with *Sueños* and its current support group for mothers.

Participant Recruitment

Seven participants were recruited for this study through the community support group that *Sueños* currently holds for Latinx parents. Although about 20 mothers attended, only seven of them met the inclusion criteria (a) Latinx or Hispanic, (b) have a child with disabilities, (c) access educational and supportive services through a current IEP, and (d) have a child enrolled in middle school or high school. One participant was included in the study who did not currently have a child receiving special education services; however, she had gone through the process of requesting support from school but had been denied an assessment. Due to her experience with requesting services, she was included in the study.

Participant Profiles

Ana

A stay-at-home mom who runs a cake baking business out of her home. She has a son in the 3rd grade who receives special education services and has an IEP due to being diagnosed with Down Syndrome. Her child is non-verbal and requires a lot of support.

Maria

A stay-at-home mother with 3 children. Her oldest daughter qualifies for special education services due to a learning disability and her youngest child has a 504 plan due to a newly diagnosed health condition.

Carmen

A self-employed mom who cleans homes and offices. She has a son in the 3rd grade who qualifies for special education services due to a speech and language impairment.

Teresa

A stay-at-home mother with 3 children in high school. Two of them qualify for special education services due to a specific learning disability and a speech and language impairment.

Lupe

A mother of 3 children who do not receive special education services. However, she was included in the study due to her experience of being denied an evaluation for her son, who was failing most classes and experiencing a short attention span and inattentiveness at home and in school.

Gloria

A stay-at-home mother who has a child in the 3rd grade receiving special education services due to a specific learning disability.

Carolina

Originally the co-facilitator for this study's workshops. She is an Education Specialist for Sueños and helps advocate for the families in the community. She has two children, one of whom was diagnosed with autism.

Protection of Human Subjects

In this study, the protection of human subjects followed the standards set by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines, which comply with federal and state regulations to protect participants' rights and well-being (Resnick, 2019). Participation in this study was voluntary, and I ensured the confidentiality of all parents who participated in this project through the use of pseudonyms. I asked the participants for permission to record the workshops. In addition, workshop and observation notes were stored in a secure location, and no one from the district, schools, or university received any information that could identify participants. Participants were offered a summary of the study's results.

During the workshops, participants were recorded via Zoom; the workshop recordings were stored on the researcher's computer in a secure file. Following the final dissertation, these recordings and all transcriptions, data, coding, and other study materials that used pseudonyms to ensure the anonymity of participants will be permanently deleted. School site names, city names, school districts, and any other identifying information were redacted to protect participants' identities. No costs or adverse effects were anticipated for this study. Due to the various limitations to internet access and email attachments, this study utilized verbal consent (see Appendices A & B). This verbal consent was reviewed with the mothers during the introductory session

Intervention

The eight-week study was conducted during a weekly workshop offered to Latinx mothers with children in special education. Along with a parent coordinator, I took on a co-facilitator role. During the eight weeks, the 90-minute workshops covered various topics including: (a) understanding special education, (b) increasing knowledge on services available to

support their child's academic progress, (c) communicating and working collaboratively to increase family-school partnerships, and (d) learning strategies to improve advocacy and participation. The workshops aimed to promote self-agency by supporting parents in identifying areas they would like to strengthen to become better advocates for their children. Each week of the workshop, the mothers received a discussion topic. They came together as a group, taking the lead in the discussion by responding to each other's comments. During the workshop, the posed questions explored the mothers' perceptions and the possible interventions that may help address the obstacles that have prevented them from engaging in the past.

The need for a workshop grew from a larger discussion initiated by the mothers when they attended a general support group for parents in 2020. They expressed frustration with communication from schools and a lack of understanding of the school system; they did not know how to approach their children's teachers or school counselors. The workshop was developed because of their concerns, focusing on topic areas to improve their participation in their children's special education processes, to build an understanding of special education, and to identify successful strategies to increase their engagement in their children's schools. See Appendix C for all the handouts and materials used during the workshop. Below is a brief description of the topics covered weekly during the workshops:

Workshop 1

The workshop began with introductions and ice breaker to establish a working relationship and start to build community with the mothers. The topic for this week was to build community and explore what an IEP is. Due to the amount of jargon used to explain special education, evaluations, and services, parents often struggle to participate in IEP meetings

because they feel inadequate and find it challenging to advocate based on their lack of knowledge of what resources are available to them (Burke et al., 2016).

Workshop 2

The workshop began by welcoming the mothers, review of the previous week and an ice breaker for the week to increase engagement from the mothers. The topic for this week focused on types of IEPs. The mothers were given an overview of initial, annual, and tri-annual IEPs. Additionally, they were provided information about accommodations and modifications available to support their children to make academic progress or access resources to support their child's learning. The workshop ended with a closure activity; I prompted the mothers to share out one new thing they learned during the workshop. After the share out, I thanked them for their participation and sharing their stories.

Workshop 3

The workshop began with the routine check-in, review the previous week to answer any questions and encourage conversation. The topic for this week covered an overview of tools to increase family-school partnerships through communication. We also identified targeted interventions to help improve family-school partnerships because it has been identified as a key factor in increased student academic achievement (Burke, 2017). The workshop ended with a closure activity; I prompted the mothers to share out one new thing they learned during the workshop. After the share out, I thanked them for their participation and sharing their stories.

Workshop 4

The workshop began with a routine check-in, ice breaker to engage the mothers and review of the previous week. The workshop focused on an IEP checklist to better prepare for IEP meetings. Due to the systemic barriers unique to Latinx families, such as a limited amount of

information in their native language, Latinx parents may rely on schools to make the decisions about their child's education (Burke et al., 2018). The workshop ended with a closure activity; I prompted the mothers to share out one new thing they learned during the workshop. After the share out, I thanked them for their participation and sharing their stories.

Workshop 5

The workshop began with a routine check-in, ice breaker to engage the mothers and review of the previous week. The workshop focused on parent rights under IDEA (2004). According to a study by Lian and Fontáñez-Phelan (2001), parents were less likely to enforce their parental rights due to a perceived lack of education and English proficiency. According to IDEA, all parents/guardians are encouraged to participate actively in IEP meetings (Burke et al., 2018) to fully understand their roles as active participants in their children's special education process. They must fully understand the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the process to increase their children's access to resources and services. The workshop ended with a closure activity; I prompted the mothers to share out one new thing they learned during the workshop. After the share out, I thanked them for their participation and sharing their stories.

Workshop 6

The workshop began with a routine check-in, ice breaker to engage the mothers and review of the previous week. In this workshop, the mothers learned about community resources to build their support network outside of schools. According to Yosso (2005), people need to build social capital and develop an established network of individuals and community resources to navigate institutions. The workshop ended with a closure activity; I prompted the mothers to share out one new thing they learned during the workshop. After the share out, I thanked them for their participation and sharing their stories.

Workshop 7

The workshop began with a routine check-in, ice breaker to engage the mothers and review of the previous week. During workshop 7, the participants discussed the topic they chose for the week, which was ways to increase participation during IEP meetings. They discussed ways to utilize their handouts and folders to remind them to take notes, what questions to ask, and how to maintain their IEP records in an orderly manner. Additionally, the participants requested more information regarding community advocacy resources to seek support if they feel that their school districts are not being receptive to their requests. The workshop ended with a closure activity; I prompted the mothers to share out one new thing they learned during the workshop. After the share out, I thanked them for their participation and sharing their stories.

Workshop 8

This workshop began by an overview of all the weeks and the work the moms had done for the past weeks. Space for reflection was given for the mothers to share their experience in the workshops and share how they will apply the skills they learned to support their child's education. This last week focused on a reflection on the entire workshop. Mueller et al. (2009) found that support groups provide emotional support and information invaluable to parents of children with disabilities. Moreover, their findings showed that families identified support groups as their primary source of information to help them navigate the system. The mothers took initiative to close out the workshop by sharing how they learned from one another, encouraged each other to continue to work together to support one another outside of the workshops. At the end of the workshop, the mothers were gifted a binder with all the handouts used for the workshops, sleeves to keep documents they receive in the future and a notebook to take their notes.

Data Sources

I gathered the information for this study through participant observation and video recordings of the eight workshops.

Workshops

Each workshop was video and audio recorded through the “record meeting” Zoom feature. Because I am fluent in Spanish, I did not need an interpreter. I conducted all my conversations and communication with participants in Spanish. I then transcribed these meetings. To maintain the authenticity of participants’ voices, direct quotations from parents remained in Spanish.

Field Notes

As a participant and an observer in this study, I kept field notes to identify any relevant nonverbal cues to an interaction, story, or mood during the workshops. Because I recorded and reviewed the recordings of the workshops for transcription purposes, I added to the field notes to document interactions that I noticed during the review of the recordings that I may have missed while facilitating the workshop.

Procedures and Timeline

This study took place over twelve weeks, during the months of September - December 2021. A detailed timeline of the study activities is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Timeline for Data Collection

Date	Qualitative Data	Research Action
9/16/2021	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Begin recruiting participants, ● Overview of workshop ● Introduce facilitators ● Collect consent forms

Date	Qualitative Data	Research Action
9/23/2021	Workshop 1	What is an IEP? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Overview of disabilities that qualify for an IEP
9/30/2021	Workshop 2	Types of IEPs/Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Annuals, amendments, and triennial assessments ● Modification vs. accommodations
10/7/2021	Workshop 3	Family–School Partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How to communicate with teachers ● Ways to check grades ● Identifying who is in the IEP team
10/21/2021	Workshop 4	Parent Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tools for participation during an IEP Meeting ● IEP checklist
11/4/2021	Workshop 5	Parent Rights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parent/Guardian Rights under IDEA
11/11/2021	Workshop 6	Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community resources
11/18/2021	Workshop 7	Parent-Led Topic Leave it up to participants to bring up a topic of concern
12/2/2021	Workshop 8	Collective Reflection Reflect on the workshop/identify ways that it has increased knowledge/advocacy
12/2/2021 - 6/1/2022	Workshop Transcripts	Identify themes from transcripts and analyze data from focus groups

Week 1: Recruitment and Introduction of Participants and Study

We made the workshop available to mothers identified as having a child in special education and attached information about the larger agency's community support group for parents. Due to COVID-19 health regulations and a countywide shelter-in-place order, all meetings took place virtually via Zoom every Thursday from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Two weeks before workshop #1, my co-facilitator contacted the mothers via telephone to inform them of the group and invited them to participate in the series of workshops (#1-8). During week 1, we held an *introductory session* (via Zoom). I gave the mothers an overview of the workshop series. During this introductory session, Ana and I informed the participants about the research and that we will utilize the discussions for research purposes and will record the workshops through Zoom to ensure the accuracy of the narratives and information shared. Participants were reassured of confidentiality and the use of pseudonyms to protect their privacy, and that no identifying information would be shared. During the introductory session, I engaged in personal narratives of my experience as an immigrant navigating the US school system and my experiences working with special education. This strategy was useful in providing the participants with my background information as a leader of the group. At the same time, I hoped that sharing my life experiences helped solicit the participants' stories. The level of information in the workshop was adapted to the mothers' literacy levels to ensure that the presentation's language and format was easily accessible.

Weeks 2- 10: Conduct Workshops

During Weeks 2–10, the workshops (#1 -8) were guided by specific topics. The facilitators provided a PowerPoint presentation as a visual aid for the mothers with information highlighting the topic of discussion and providing research-based information. Due to the limited

access to the internet and computers, we provided the mothers with a printout copy of all the PowerPoint presentations. The facilitators posted questions (Appendices D & E) to prompt the mothers to engage in discussion amongst themselves and with facilitators while addressing the research questions under investigation. At the end of workshop #6, the mothers were asked to think of a topic they would like more information on. As a collective group, they had to identify the topic they would like facilitators to discuss the following week. All workshops were facilitated in Spanish.

During workshop #7, the participants discussed the topic they chose for the week. The participants chose to review ways to increase their participation during IEP meetings. They discussed ways to utilize their handouts and folders to remind them of notetaking, questions to ask and how to maintain their IEP records in an orderly manner. Additionally, the participants requested more information regarding community advocacy resources where they could seek support if they felt like their school districts were not being receptive of their requests. Facilitators brought research-based information related to the topic. This week was designed to allow the participants to take part in a collective process to identify an issue that is important to them as a group and engage in critical reflection. It also empowered them with a feeling of control over the information they were seeking and the knowledge they gained from the workshop.

Workshop #8 was designed as an open space for the mothers to reflect on their experiences participating in the workshop. This week focused on an in-depth exploration led by the facilitators to encourage the mothers to engage in a collective critical reflection on what skills they had learned, how they will use these skills to increase their participation in developing their children's special education plans, and whether they felt like the workshop was useful in learning

the skills and knowledge required to support their children in special education. Lastly, the mothers were encouraged to share how the workshop, as a space for community building, helped them orient one another on new practices and beliefs about themselves as parents and advocates for their children.

Data Analysis

An overview of the research questions, data sources, and analysis method are presented in the following table. According to Creswell and Creswell (2020), data should be organized in a sequential series to analyze data from general to specific information. As seen in Table 2, a series of open-ended questions were created that included topics regarding parent background information, home-to-school relationships, self-perception of their roles in the process of special education, and participation.

Table 2

Workshop Questions

Research Question	Workshop #/Questions
1. In what ways does a community-based workshop program for Latinx parents increase their IEP advocacy knowledge	<p>Workshop #8</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What skills do you think you will be able to apply from this workshop in IEP meetings in the future? (Workshop 8) 2. What ways did this workshop help you increase your knowledge about your rights/resources? (Workshop 8)
1a. How can a parent-to-parent community-based workshop program provide support to Latinx parents in special education?	<p>Workshop 6</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you know other parents with children in special education? 2. How did you meet them?

Research Question	Workshop #/Questions
2. What are parents' perceptions of how they are included in the special education process of referral, evaluation, placement, and education planning?	3. Does school ever create an opportunity for you to meet other families? 4. How does community organizing and (this?) support group for Latinx parents contribute to the well-being of the community of Latinxparents in special education? 5. How do you build community within the area you live in? 6. What services do you think we could use to improve this community of Latinx parents in special education in your area?
	Workshop #8 1. What ways did this workshop help you increase your knowledge about your rights/resources? (Workshop 8) 2. What action steps can we take to maintain a community of support for Latinx parents in special education?
	Workshop # 2 1. What's your understanding of your child's disability? (Workshop 2) 2. What has your experience been like raising a child with a disability? (Workshop 2) 3. Do you normally attend IEP meetings? (Workshop 2) 4. Do you feel like assessments and evaluations are explained to you in a way you understand? (Workshop 2)

Research Question	Workshop #/Questions
2a. How do parents' perceptions of school implementation of IEP services and practices impact parent involvement?	Workshop #3
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What can your IEP team do in order to make you feel more connected and involved during an IEP meeting? (Workshop 3) 2. Do you feel you understand the information provided to you during an IEP meeting? (Workshop 3) 3. What could school administration and the IEP team do to help you be more engaged? 4. How can the school help you improve your understanding of the IEP process and implementation?
	Workshop #5
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. What factors do you think impact your involvement in your child's IEP meetings? (Workshop 5) 4. Do you feel like your input is considered when making decisions in IEP meetings? 5. In your opinion, what role do you think attending workshops to increase your special education knowledge will have on increasing your participation in the IEP process in your child's school? (Workshop 5) 6. What do you wish school staff/teachers would know (or do) to better support Latinx parents with special needs children? (Workshop 5) 7. In your opinion, do you feel like your child's school promotes or maintains your cultural needs? (Workshop 5)

Research Question	Workshop #/Questions
2b. What perceptions do Latinx parents/families have of the ways that schools structure opportunities for engagement for them and their children?	<p>Workshop #5</p> <p>1. What do you wish school staff/teachers would know (or do) to better support Latinx parents with special needs children? (Workshop 5)</p> <p>2. In your opinion, do you feel like your child's school promotes or maintains your cultural needs? (Workshop 5)</p>

To analyze the data from this study, I reviewed recordings of the workshops. I kept field notes to document general thoughts and reflections and note any nonverbal cues that were not captured by audio recordings but were relevant to the narratives being shared that support the questions investigated in this study. All data were transcribed and visually organized with supporting quotations to provide multiple perspectives about the participants' experiences with the school system, specifically in special education. Since I am a native Spanish speaker, I analyzed and transcribed the data from the workshops without an interpreter. Table 3, shows a summary of questions, data source, data type and analysis method used for this study.

Table 3

Summary of Research Questions and Data Collection Method, Data Type and Analysis

Research Questions	Method	Data Type	Analysis Method
1. In what ways does a community-based workshop program for Latinx parents increase their IEP advocacy knowledge	● Participant observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Audio/video recordings from workshops ● Transcripts of audio/video recordings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Open coding ● Axial coding
1a. How can a parent-to-parent			

Research Questions	Method	Data Type	Analysis Method
community-based workshop program provide support to Latinx parents in special education?			
2. What are parents' perceptions of how they are included in the special education process of referral, evaluation, placement, and education planning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participant Observation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Audio/video recordings from workshops ● Transcripts of audio/video recordings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Open coding ● Axial coding
2a. How do parents' perceptions of school implementation of IEP services and practices impact parent involvement?			
2b. What perceptions do Latinx parents/families have of the ways that schools structure opportunities for engagement for them and their children?			

In qualitative research, coding is particularly important to identify any meaningful data from the beginning of the study that may represent a phenomenon and help conceptualize the core issues found within (Spiggle, 1994). Coding is also important for bracketing information that represents a category based on participants' words (Creswell & Creswell, 2020). I used open coding for thematic exploration because using open coding in qualitative research allows a code to be assigned to a group of ideas or concepts in a systematic way that is grounded in the data (Williams & Moser, 2019). To evaluate the research questions, I created a set of open-ended questions for every workshop to elicit conversation and narratives from the participants. The questions specifically targeted the mothers' experiences with special education, advocacy, and parent participation. To ensure the accuracy of the data, I transcribed the workshops and conversations verbatim from the recordings. Through open coding, I was able to identify words, statements, and events that emerged throughout the workshops to look for patterns in the mothers' statements and the meaning behind those statements. I created a list of open codes that linked to the mothers' narratives. By listening repeatedly to the workshops, I completed line-by-line open and axial coding to conceptualize the categories and build the data for this study

I used axial coding to identify thematic relationships and make meaning of the data grounded within the participants' voices and attached to the workshop transcripts. Axial coding provides an analytical phase to interpret data and reflect on meaning (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Axial coding also helps identify categories and situate them within a theoretical model to analyze the themes and issues being investigated (Creswell & Creswell, 2020). I reviewed the recordings and transcribed the data gathered from the workshops and field notes to extract phrases and words that form meaningful categories relevant to this study. Some data was coded in both languages, but mainly in Spanish, to preserve and honor the mothers' voices. Because I

investigated key elements to increase Latinx parent participation from the parents' perspective, it was important to identify themes emerging from the data.

Axial coding helped me identify the relationships among the codes and develop broader themes. I used a comparative approach between workshops to identify emerging themes. Very subtle changes emerged between theme development and coding, and I resolved the discrepancy by reviewing the recordings to ensure the coding and themes were consistent. Initial broad categorical themes were based on the questions asked throughout the workshops, with more specific themes identified based on common participant answers, experiences, or comments. The themes I identified were (a) cultivating confidence in parent advocacy, (b) parents' roles/rights, (c) interpretation services, (d) school-to-home communication, (e) the inclusion of culture, and (f) Covid-19. As shown in Tables 4 and 5, open and axial coding helped to identify these key elements and themes to gain a deeper understanding of the barriers, which helped suggest more attractive alternatives to increase Latinx parents' participation and advocacy that meet their unique, diverse cultural needs.

Table 4

Summary of Open Codes, Axial Codes and Themes for Research Question 1

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge • Skill building • Advocate • Feel heard • Perceived sense of belonging with other parents • School staff unsupportive • Classroom Management • Safety concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivating Confidence in Parent Advocacy

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence • Exercise their voices • Feeling unheard • Unfamiliar with IDEA • Lack of understanding of rights and resources • Lack of understanding of IEP document • Do not feel safe sharing their opinion • Language barrier • Overwhelmed by information and legal jargon • Feel tension from school staff • Unsupportive in explaining parent rights and resource • Lack of Interpretation during meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal and Rights • Inequity • Power Imbalance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Roles and Rights

Table 5

Summary of Open Codes, Axial Codes and Themes for Research Question 2

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve language support • Translation of documents in a timely manner • Make staff available that are bi-lingual • Inadequate interpretation from untrained staff • Explain evaluations in native language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Alienation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretation Services

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived discrimination due to language • Lack of information available in native language about resources • Feel unwelcomed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Responsiveness • Connections • Parent Involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-to-home communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low teacher communication • Lack of interpretation during parent conference • Parent conferences brief • Lack of communication outside of parent conferences • Disconnect of needs versus support given to their children • Lack of understanding of how IEP is being applied • Build stronger relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel culture and language is excluded • Celebrate their culture • Research famous people that resemble and embody their culture • Include them in school events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covid-19 • Administration mismanagement • Exclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covid-19

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online classes not suitable for learning • Responsibility to follow IEP • Lack of support for disabled students • Parents not able to attend outings or support children at school • Technology 		

I analyzed the data and thematic findings through the lens of critical race theory (CRT) and disability critical race theory (DisCrit) to highlight the voices, experiences, and agency of parents. The theoretical framework for this study provided a lens to analyze the intersectionality of race, language, culture and disability that Latinx parents experience while navigating the special education system.

CRT reveals how parent involvement, as it is currently defined, represents a structure of oppression that disproportionately impacts Latinx parents in special education. According to Rosetti et al. (2001), culturally and linguistically diverse parents often face systemic barriers that lead to them feeling disempowered by placing importance on professional and technical special education knowledge. In order for Latinx parents to meet the expectations of advocacy for their children, they must first gain the information and cultural capital necessary for them to engage in conversations with school staff, asking the necessary questions to guide decisions that directly impact their children. Utilization of a CRT framework to analyze the data in this study helped identify the themes that emerged around participants often feeling disempowered, the inequality of knowledge leading them to be unable to advocate appropriately for their children, and

systemic barriers of access to appropriate interpretation services excluding them from effectively participating in discussions that directly impacted their children's education.

DisCrit is a theory derived from CRT; therefore, it serves as an additional tool to critique and reimagine how schools can better serve families with children labeled with a disability. I utilized the DisCrit framework in this study as a lens to examine ways to improve practices in special education. These ways should place emphasis on the perspectives, feelings and experiences of Latinx parents who often experience marginalization and should encourage solutions to close the gaps that currently exist in special education from their perspective. Furthermore, parents' accounts of the perceived level of knowledge gained in the workshops can address the current research gap in identifying strengths and the preferred methods of engagement by centering on the parents' voices in the focus groups.

Validity

Validity in qualitative research is the careful collection and conceptualization of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The triangulation of multiple data analysis procedures was completed to address descriptive validity in this study and ensure the accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2020). I used audio recordings, transcripts of audio recordings, observations and field notes to assist with this.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) wrote that a "good qualitative researcher gets much of its claim to validity from the researcher's ability to show convincingly how they got there, and how they built confidence that this was the best account possible" (p. 252). Creswell (2020) posited that reliability in qualitative research is achieved by documenting in as much detail as possible the process of the procedures that helped the researcher arrive at their results. I carefully reviewed

the recordings, memos, and field notes to code the data used to inform this study and ensure reliability.

Limitations

A possible limiting factor is that the use of a virtual platform due to mandatory shelter-in-place orders and public health regulations related to the COVID-19 pandemic might influence the extent to which mothers are willing to participate and share their stories within the focus group. A second possible limitation is that, due to COVID-19-related distance learning in schools, recent experiences might influence how the mothers view their school districts, positively or negatively, which could influence their responses and anecdotal narratives. Finally, another possible limiting factor is that the amount of time in which the study was conducted may have been too short and may have limited the amount of in-depth exploration of themes brought up in the workshops.

Positionality

As a native of El Salvador, I saw my life—and the lives of my family— forever change after the Salvadoran Civil War. My parents no longer felt safe in the country that they had always known as home and decided to join the rest of my family in California. I came to the United States when I was ten years old. My parents made the decision to immigrate in search of promises of a better future that the United States embodied for their family. *Metieron una casa entera en una maleta* (they put their entire home in a suitcase) and never looked back.

My parents were tasked with making sure that my sister and I were enrolled in school. Entering the US school system felt like the beginning of my assimilation and adaptation to a culture and language that was markedly different from mine. I remember testing out of the grade I had been assigned by age due to knowing more than the material taught at that level in the US,

but because I did not know the language, I was held back and placed in English classes. At the time, I did not know what that would mean for my educational career, but I later found out that being in ESL limited my options for moving up to academic courses that mattered to get into college. Such courses were not available unless I tested out of ESL classes. I felt frustrated and alone at times because the adults at school who were supposed to guide and support me only told me what I lacked; support was non-existent. At one point, my counselor discouraged me from attending a program for college-bound students, telling me, “the workshops are only for students that actually want to go to college.” The frustration I felt fueled a passion to make something out of myself. Because my parents always told me, “*la educacion te llevara muy lejos*” (education will take you far), I also felt that it was my duty to work hard and make sure that all the sacrifices my parents made were returned; my education meant their liberation as well.

I went on to obtain my master’s in marriage and family therapy and became a mental health counselor for K–12 students. Thirteen years later, I returned to a public school campus. It was at this moment that I started to notice that not much had changed since I had been in school: parents that looked like mine continued to struggle to understand and advocate for their children. The same theme continued among administrators, who attributed academic achievement to parent participation—itsself eventually connected to “caring parents,” suggesting that underachievement was due to a lack of parent participation, especially among students of color. For many parents, the overwhelming systematic barriers represented by special education were so daunting that they had difficulty expressing their needs and wants for their children. Their inability to communicate with their children’s teachers, due to the language barrier and lack of knowledge of the system, often made them silent in meetings where their voices mattered and were needed.

For this dissertation research study, I consider myself both an insider *and* outsider because of my ethnic/linguistic heritage, racial closeness with the participants, and because of the work I have done in special education with Latinx parents. However, I am not necessarily from the same socioeconomic status or country of origin as the participants, and I have a different educational background. And while I have lived experiences in Latinx communities, I was not raised in nor have I lived in the geographic community where the research was conducted.

Summary

This chapter presented the methodology for the study of Latinx parents' experiences of the special education process to identify and explore culturally responsive interventions that can increase parents' participation and advocacy for their children with disabilities. The research design follows a qualitative case study approach. A description of the sample was provided, including the setting and participants. The focus group details were given, including information regarding the workshop that helped Latinx mothers. The data sources were described as well as a description of the instruments. The data collection procedures were explained, and an analysis of the data was presented. My aim is that this study provides Latinx parents with the opportunity to share their experiences in navigating the special education system, shed light on their perspectives of the workshops, and document parent perspectives of culturally responsive interventions to increase agency and stronger family engagement opportunities.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the experiences of Latinx parents with children in special education to identify and explore culturally responsive interventions that can increase parent participation and advocacy. Latinx families often experience racism and ableism simultaneously while navigating the special education system in U.S. schools. Many factors, such as language, knowledge, and racial barriers, affect how Latinx families participate in the development of their child's special-education plan. The study addressed the following research questions:

1. In what ways does a community-based workshop program for Latinx parents increase their IEP advocacy knowledge?
 - 1a. How can a parent-to-parent community-based workshop program provide support to Latinx parents in special education?
2. What are parents' perceptions of how they are included in the special education process of referral, evaluation, placement, and education planning?
 - 2a. How do parents' perceptions of school implementation of IEP services and practices impact parent involvement?
 - 2b. What perceptions do Latinx parents have of the ways that schools structure opportunities for engagement for them and their children?

I gathered the data for this research study over eight weeks during a community-based weekly workshop offered to Latinx mothers with children in special education. During the workshops, we asked the participants a series of open-ended questions about their experiences regarding language, perceptions, and knowledge of special education; feelings about their child's education; understanding of and experiences with their child's IEP; and overall satisfaction with their child's special-education plan. I thoughtfully designed the open-ended questions to build on critical race theory and community cultural wealth, as well as to build on existing studies on

Latinx parents' advocacy for and participation in special education in the United States. Each recollection and narration from the mothers exemplifies at least one form of community cultural wealth and reflects how Latinx parents fortify their capital and strengthen their identities as advocates to persist even when they encounter structures of oppression that make them feel as though they do not belong.

Data analysis was conducted by reviewing recordings of the workshops and creating a series of transcriptions in English and Spanish. This chapter provides an analysis of the collected data according to the themes that emerged within the context of each research question. Six overarching themes emerged from the analysis of the collected data from the study. The themes that emerged were: (1) cultivating confidence in parent advocacy, (2) parents' roles and rights, (3) interpretation services, (4) school-to-home communication, (5) the inclusion of culture, and (6) Covid-19 impact. Lastly, this chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

Research Question One

Research question one was addressed through a series of open-ended questions from workshop six and workshop 8 (see Table 3.2). Two themes emerged and are discussed in the following sections.

Theme One: Cultivating confidence in parent advocacy

When asked the question, "What skills do you think you will be able to apply from this workshop in IEP meetings in the future?" The theme of parent advocacy permeated their answers as they shared their life experiences and frustration about the lack of knowledge and voice they have felt throughout their child's academic experience. The mothers explained that they valued all the information that was shared by the other mothers and the information the workshops had to offer because it was information that they did not know in the past before the workshops.

Gaining access to resources strengthened the mothers' aspirational capital. They emphasized their desire to nurture a future of possibilities for their children so they can have a better future. To the mothers, being able to have a career meant being financially secure, respected, and not having to endure the barriers they had to overcome.

Ana was one of the mothers throughout the workshop who exhibited the most growth obtained from the knowledge she had gained. Ana has a child that has is diagnosed with Down Syndrome and is non-verbal. Ana initially shared in Weeks 1 and 2 that her son kept coming home with unexplained bruises due to falling and that the school would not provide her any information. As she shared her story, the rest of the mothers in the group shared their knowledge of ways to communicate with school administration and aided her with additional skills to advocate for her child. They came together as a community to encourage her to have a more active role. At the end of Week 6, she shared with the group that she had been able to apply the skills shared and knowledge gained from the workshops to advocate for her child. She reported that she had gained daily reports of her child and she had been told that her IEP team was in the midst of coordinating an IEP meeting to support her child in obtaining access to communication tools that would teach him to communicate through communication devices.

Ana describes how the workshops prepared her to feel comfortable with asking for support, requesting information from her child's school, and gaining knowledge about services that are available and are needed to support her child:

La escuela no habló conmigo al principio del año escolar y me dijo que debido a Covid, el IEP seguirá siendo el mismo y no se necesita ninguna reunión. Venir a este taller me ayudó a entender que puedo solicitar una reunión del IEP, que necesito un intérprete que me dé toda la información que necesito y a adquirir habilidades para saber cómo pedir apoyo e información sobre mi hijo. Mi hijo se ha caído mucho y se ha asustado de las rodillas y no me han dado ninguna información sobre el incidente. Ahora sé que puedo pedir informes diarios y que mi hijo necesita más apoyo con el equipo adicional que pueda necesitar para

comunicarse ya que no es verbal. Antes no sabía toda esta información, ahora que esto me ha ayudado a adquirir más conocimientos, sé formas de defender y expresar mis necesidades para mi hijo y para mí.

School did not talk to me at the beginning of the school year and told me that because of Covid, the IEP will remain the same and no meeting is needed. Coming to this workshop help me understand that I can request an IEP meeting; I need a interpreter that can give me all the information I need and gain skills to know how to ask for support and information about my child. My son has fallen a lot and scarred his knees, and no information about the incident had given to me. I now know that I can ask for daily reports, and my son needs more support with additional equipment that he may need to communicate since he is non-verbal. I did not know all this information before, but now that this helped me gain more knowledge, I know ways I can advocate and express my needs for my son and I.

Maria is a mother of three children and has one child already receiving special education services for a learning disability. Her youngest is currently receiving 504 services due to a recent diagnosis of a health disability. She mentioned her frustration around navigating services and not knowing what she was asking for before. She shared that receiving the information from the workshops helped her identify how to inform herself better and advocate for her daughter. She gained confidence in learning the skills because she learned from the other participants and their experiences, and she felt a community of support and non-judgment.

Los talleres nos han ayudado a ralentizar el proceso. Por primera vez, desde que mi hijo está en educación especial, siento que alguien se ha tomado el tiempo de explicar qué es, qué recursos hay disponibles y realmente ha desglosado los pasos para pedir ayuda. Los talleres han hecho que la información sea accesible de una manera que puedo entender. Normalmente los colegios lo hacen todo deprisa, el lenguaje es tan complicado que siento que quizá sea culpa mía por no entender el inglés. Siento que puedo expresarme aquí porque siento que mi opinión se tiene en cuenta.

The workshops have helped to slow down the process for us. For the first time, since my child has been in special education, I feel like someone has taken the time to explain what it is, what resources are available, and really broken down the steps on how to ask for help. The workshops have made the information accessible in a way that I can understand. Usually schools rush everything, the language is so complicated that it I feel like maybe it's my fault for not understanding English. I feel like I can express myself in here because I feel like my opinion is considered.

The virtual workshop allowed the mothers to participate in an opportunity to gain knowledge and access a community grounded in shared experiences and culture. Because the workshops took place over Zoom, the mothers shared that they would access the workshops while they also tended to the needs of their families. Some shared that they would often be off camera because they had to cook, support their children during after-school sports activities, or, in some cases, work. Despite their multitasking, they were always engaged and asked relevant questions. Consequently, this created a sense of a safe place that allowed them to ask questions, share knowledge, and produce knowledge.

Carmen, a mother who has a son in Elementary school and has been diagnosed with a speech delay, shared that attending the parent-to-parent community-based workshop program helped her learn from the experiences of other mothers:

Me gusta sentir que estoy en comunidad con otras madres. El hecho de poder conectarme y simplemente escuchar la información que he recibido, me ayuda a comprender mejor la educación especial y el proceso del IEP. Siento que todo el mundo tiene un espacio seguro para compartir sus historias y recibir comentarios sobre cómo mejorar la forma de abogar por nuestros hijos. También tenemos el conocimiento para entender cuáles son nuestros derechos.

I like to feel like I am in community with other mothers. The fact that I am able to log on and just listen to the information I received, helps me gain a better understanding of the Special education and the IEP process. I feel like everyone has a safe space to share their stories and receive feedback on how to improve how we advocate for our children. We also have the knowledge to understand what our rights are.

The workshops provided the mothers an opportunity to come together, engage in critical discourse, share their experiences, and move toward action that benefits them by increasing their knowledge and skills and helps the school system. Parents learned the skills needed to improve communication between schools and home, establishing a path for collaboration in IEP meetings. The workshops encouraged the mothers to engage in dialogue to raise consciousness in a

community context and propose new ways in which their roles as a parent could address the pertinent issues that affect their engagement and advocacy. They built a sense of collective action and advocacy by coming together as a group.

Theme Two: Parents' Roles and Rights

The mothers explained that knowledge was important to them and that in the workshops, not only were they able to learn, but they had found a new sense of empowerment. When asked, “What ways did the workshop help you increase your knowledge about your rights/resources?” they all stated that the education system is not built to be accessible to anyone who does not speak English; therefore, immigrant parents’ monolingual voices often are silenced.

During the eight weeks, the mothers consistently shared that no one in the school district had informed them of their rights, their role in IEPs, and what resources were available to them. Teresa is a mother of three children and two of her children are receiving special education services under the eligibility of a specific learning disability and speech and language impairment. Teresa shared that her children have been receiving special education services for the past eight years, and no one in the school District shared with her all the information she knew about Special Education and IEP’s. Teresa shared that she learned about them after she sought out support from legal aid when she felt that her children were not progressing academically.

Nadie nos da la ayuda que necesitamos a menos que nos desvivamos por encontrarla. En mi caso, no fue hasta que recibí el apoyo del Golden Gate Regional Center, que pude tener a alguien que realmente prestara atención a mis peticiones y mis hijos pudieron recibir más apoyo. Hay mucha gente en la comunidad hispana que no se siente segura al compartir los retos con sus hijos y siento que un espacio como este nos ayuda a compartir y desestigmatizar la Educación Especial y los problemas que nuestros hijos pueden estar pasando. Al mismo tiempo somos capaces de aprender nuevas habilidades y tener una voz para expresar nuestras necesidades.

Nobody gives us the help that we need unless we go out of our way to find it. For me, it was not up until I received support from Golden Gate Regional Center, that I was able to have someone really pay attention to my requests, and my children were able to get more support. There are a lot of people in the Hispanic community that do not feel safe in sharing the challenges with their kids and I feel like a space like this helps us share and destigmatize Special Education and the problems our kids may be going through. At the same time we are able to learn new skills and have a voice to express our needs.

Teresa was not the only mother who shared similar experiences; some mothers shared anecdotes of teachers who went out of their way to help them understand their rights, the IEP process, and the reasons their children needed the special education process. Some of the mothers made it a point to acknowledge such teachers by name and recognized that their overall frustration with how their children's special education was handled could sometimes overshadow their positive experiences with teachers who helped them along the way. The participants emphasized that they had a positive attitude towards such teachers because they served as resources within their network to support their children's education.

Navigating the special education process and school system in the United States means Latinx parents have to face multiple barriers that affect their access to their rights and roles as parents. Some participants were more vocal than others about their frustration of feeling silenced through the lack of resources from the school in support of interpretation services. However, they often remarked about not being able to communicate with people at school, whether in meetings or with administrative staff in a school's front office. Carmen shared that she has had difficulties knowing about her role in IEPs because she feels her voice is not heard due to the language barrier. She mentioned that the language barrier had impeded her from actively participating in

meetings. Not knowing her rights and how to ask for resources to help her be more active in meetings has also influenced how involved she is.

Ha habido muchas reuniones del IEP en las que los documentos no fueron traducidos a mi idioma antes de la reunión. Cuando he asistido a las reuniones, el documento seguía estando en inglés. También he tenido experiencias en las que han sacado a cualquiera, incluso a un conserje, para que sea mi intérprete en la reunión. He tenido experiencias en las que noto que todo el mundo habla y el intérprete sólo me da una frase y sé que han estado hablando durante unos 5 minutos. Antes de estos talleres no sabía que tengo derecho a que me traduzcan los documentos a tiempo para la reunión. También sé que tengo derecho a un servicio de interpretación de calidad. Al conocer esta información, ahora sé que puedo tener un papel más activo en las futuras reuniones y hacer que se escuche mi voz. A menudo siento que mi voz no está presente en las reuniones.

There has been many IEP meetings in which the documents were not translated into my language before the meeting. When I attended the meetings, the document was still in English. I also have had experiences in which they have pulled anyone, even a Janitor, to be my interpreter for the meeting. I have had experiences in which I notice everyone talking and the interpreter only gives me about a sentence and I know they have been talking for about 5 minutes. I was not aware before these workshops that it is my right to have the documents translated in time for the meeting. I also know that I have the right to quality interpretation services. Knowing this information, I now know that I can have a more active role in future meetings and have my voice heard. I often feel like my voice is missing from the meetings.

Prevalent in the mothers' discourse was that they not only wanted to advocate for their children to have a positive experience in school, they also wanted them to have a stronger education. The mothers made it clear that they also wanted to advocate for them to have a positive experience with every member of the IEP team because every member influences how academically successful their child will be.

Collectively, the mothers agreed that their roles in IEPs are more passive because they often do not feel like they have the right words or know what they are asking for. They feel that if the school invested more time in building a relationship with them, then they would be able to

be more active. They added that knowing their rights and having someone explain their parent safeguards to them will help them be more active and ask questions. Carmen added,

No fue hasta este taller que me enteré de lo que son las salvaguardias para los padres. Tengo una colección de esos documentos, sólo sabía que nos los daban al principio de cada reunión, pero nunca entendí cuáles son mis derechos ni cómo utilizarlos para defender a mi hijo"

It was not until this workshop that I learned what Parent Safeguards are. I have a collection of those documents; I just knew that they gave it to us at the beginning of every meeting, but never understood what my rights are or how to utilize them to advocate for my child.

Carmen referred to the workshops as a tool for her and the other mothers to take “*cartas en el asunto*” [take matters into her own hands]. Collectively, they emphasized that building on their knowledge as a community gave them not only a voice but also a newfound sense of empowerment and self-esteem. Lupe, a mother of a child in third grade who was seeking special education services for her son, reported that the workshops helped her build strength and self-esteem and gave her a voice to advocate for her child not only in school but also in other settings.

Antes tenía miedo de pedir servicios de interpretación, incluso cuando iba a la consulta del médico. No quería incomodar a nadie. Pero después de saber que los servicios de interpretación son uno de mis derechos, ahora pido un intérprete incluso para las citas con el médico. No he sentido la diferencia de poder comunicarme plenamente con los proveedores.

Before, I was afraid to ask for interpretation services, even when I went to the Doctor's office. I did not want to inconvenience anyone. But after knowing that interpretation services is one of my rights, I now ask for an interpreter even for Doctor's appointments. I haven't felt the difference of fully being able to communicate with providers.

Lupe's response exhibited the way the mothers utilized their navigational capital not only in school spaces, but also in other spaces where they may encounter challenges to navigate a favorable response. The mothers expressed an appreciation for providing education around the IEP process and resources to help them build skills to be able to advocate for their children. They

also highlighted the importance of peer support during the workshops. Anna shared how she had applied the skills learned from the workshop to real-life situations at school each week. Anna went from sharing how she did not know anything at the beginning of the workshop and, at the end of the last workshop in week eight, shared how her son would be assessed for 1:1 support to make sure that he had an equal opportunity to remain in school with his peers. Additionally, she reported receiving daily logs of how her son was doing and saw more communication from his teacher. This theme also helped answer subset research question 1a and brought forth a second theme, parents' roles and rights.

Latinx parents' participation is often limited due to factors beyond their control. As the mothers' statements in this study show, a lack of understanding and knowledge about the special-education process and special education itself creates a systemic barrier that prevents Latinx parents from fully participating in IEP meetings as required by IDEA and expected from school districts and their administrations. Educators and administration staff receive guidance either through job training or their educational backgrounds, which provides a blueprint for them as guidance to work within IDEA's procedural frameworks. Community-based programs for Latinx parents are important, as this study shows, as they provide a sense of community and extend resources to Latinx parents who could increase academic achievement for their students in special education and promote social justice. The collaborative nature of this community-based workshop program structured opportunities for the mothers to draw from each other's social and familial capital that goes beyond any opportunity offered to them in school spaces. Providing a space for parents to learn non-adversarial advocacy increases their ability to access resources to support their children's educational achievement through special education. The stories that

emerged from these mothers' experiences form a collective narrative about the Latinx communities often overlooked proactive nature and its impact on parent participation.

Research Question Two

Despite the stereotypes linked to Latinx parents' participation in special education, which often portray them as minimally invested in their child's education, the participants in this study were highly motivated to learn about the process of special education, the elements their child's IEP plan comprises, and ways they can participate in the advancement of their child's education. While sharing their experiences and discussing the barriers that exist in the system, the mothers determined that although the schools required their participation, the way the system is built has created a barrier to them being involved in school organically despite their attempts to become involved. The mothers defined parent engagement as part of the decision-making process and placed great value on involvement and building knowledge. One commonly shared view from the mothers in this study was that they received insufficient information from their IEP team members to make informed decisions about their child's IEP, available resources, and accommodations that could help advance their child's educational progress.

Research question two was addressed through a series of open-ended questions from workshops two, three and 5 (see Table 3.2). Four themes emerged and are discussed in the following sections.

Theme Three: Interpretation services

Regarding the general aspects of communication, the mothers often consider interpretation services one of the most prevalent systemic barriers that affect how they participate in their child's IEP meetings, make informed decisions, and understand their child's special-education plan. Monolingual parents often rely on interpretation services to establish

communication with their child's school; impaired interpretation can often lead to misunderstandings, a lack of information being provided to the parent, and excluding parents from the decision-making process in meetings.

The mothers emphasized their sense of gratitude that this workshop explained the information in a way that minimized legal jargon, “Necesitamos que se pongan a nuestro nivel y nos den toda la información” [*“We need them to get to our level and meet us halfway with all the information.”*]. The mothers unanimously stated that they feel like bridging the gap in interpretation services, then they could become more active in meetings. They shared that they feel ignored “Cuando los servicios de interpretación no están disponibles, parece que las escuelas no se preocupan” [*“When interpretation services are not available, it feels like the schools do not care”*].

Carolina was the workshop co-facilitator but also a mother who has had her child in special education due to being diagnosed as a child with Autism. Carolina shared her experience of not knowing at the beginning of the special education process, and she was asked to sign documents that were not in the language that she could understand, Spanish. Many of the mothers in the group shared similar experiences and reported that many of the papers were not translated in time for their meeting. At the time of the meeting, they are asked to sign the documents and have no idea what the documents are stating.

Todos los documentos relativos a la educación y las evaluaciones de mi hijo estaban en inglés. Firmé los documentos por miedo a que si no firmaba, no recibiría ninguna ayuda. Nadie se sentó conmigo cuando se le calificó por primera vez para recibir servicios de educación especial. Nadie me explicó lo que significaban las evaluaciones anuales y trianuales, cómo se iba a controlar el progreso de mi hijo mediante objetivos y los servicios que estaba recibiendo. Aprendí todo eso por mi cuenta y con la ayuda del Golden Gate Regional Center, que tenía una persona que me ayudó a entender lo que significaba todo.

All the documents pertaining to my child's education and evaluations were in English. I signed the paperwork out of fear that if I did not sign, then he will not get any help. No one sat down with me when he was first qualified for special education services. No one explained to me what annual and tri-annual evaluations meant, how my child progress was going to be monitored through goals and the services my son was receiving. I learned all of that by myself and with the help of Golden Gate Regional Center, who had a person that helped guide me to understand what it all meant.

The mothers in this study acknowledged that they often struggle with the lack of adequate interpretation services because they want the meetings to take place; they feared that if they objected to the meeting due to the lack of interpretation services, their child might miss out on services or support. They often mentioned negotiations between them and the schools in hopes that they would produce a successful outcome that would benefit their child.

The mothers often referred to interpretation services and lack of English proficiency as the significant barriers when communicating with schools or establishing a working relationship with their child's IEP team. Furthermore, they stated that the lack of support for them to access adequate interpretation services makes them feel their schools are discriminating against and alienating them, not only impacting their access to resources but also making it increasingly more challenging to feel confident that the school is working in their child's best interest. Gloria stated, "Durante una de las reuniones del IEP de mi hijo, me di cuenta de que los miembros del equipo hablaban durante unos 10 minutos, pero a la hora de interpretarme en español, la información sólo valía una frase" [*"During one of my son's IEP meetings, I noticed that the team members were talking for about 10 minutes, but when it came to interpreting back to me in Spanish, the information was only about a sentence worth"*].

Theme Four: School-to-home communication

One key concept prevalent among the mothers throughout the workshops is that often, it is not true that they do not want to advocate for their children; rather, they do not know that their

children are having difficulties in school until they start to see their failing grades. The mothers often noted that they waited for the school to initiate contact and offer support if they thought their child was not succeeding academically. Anna shared

“Cuando empecé a navegar por el sistema de Educación Especial, nadie se puso en contacto conmigo para hacerme saber que mi hijo se estaba quedando atrás. No nos dimos cuenta de que se estaba retrasando hasta que tuvimos la oportunidad de asistir a la reunión de padres y maestros”

“When I started navigating the Special Education system, no one would reach out to me to let me know my son was falling behind. We were unaware of him falling behind until we had the opportunity to attend the parent/teacher conference”

The mothers said they welcome ideas on improving and establishing communication between school and home that would increase their opportunities to become active participants in their child’s education and IEP-team meetings. Carolina shared that at the beginning of navigating the special education system, she had to rely on herself to be resourceful and reach the gap that existed in communication with her child’s teacher. She recalled that at the beginning of each school year, she would write a note and instruct her child to give it to his teacher. The note stated that he was in special education and that he had an IEP with accommodations to help him be successful in his academics. In addition, she included her contact information to encourage the teacher to contact her.

Cuando mi hijo estaba en 5° curso, me di cuenta de que no podía confiar en que el colegio supiera que mi hijo tenía un IEP. Me encargué de asegurarme de que los profesores supieran cada año que mi hijo tenía autismo y que tenía un IEP. Aprendí a hacer una "tarjeta para conocerme", en la que ponía la discapacidad de mi hijo, mi información de contacto y pedía que por favor leyeran su IEP. Sólo así empecé a recibir llamadas de los profesores al principio del curso escolar.

When my son was in 5th grade, I learned that I was not able to rely on the school knowing that my son had an IEP. I took it upon myself to make sure that teachers knew every year that my son had autism and that he had an IEP. I learned to make a "get to know me card," in which I would put my son's disability, my contact information and asked to please read his IEP. That was the only way I started to get phone calls at the beginning of the school year from teachers.

This story is one of the many stories that the mothers shared in which they became innovative in the ways that they navigated the school system. Their ability to build on their navigational capital influenced the ways they approached the lack of communication that exists between Latinx parents and teachers.

Theme Five: Inclusion of culture

Some mothers shared that they would like to be included in activities because they feel that schools often do not reach out to them to participate in outings or to be part of the school community. Maria stated, “Nos sentimos excluidos de la comunidad, nos gustaría que crearan más oportunidades para nuestra comunidad en nuestra lengua materna, para que también pudiéramos sentirnos bienvenidos.” [*“We feel excluded from the community, we would like you to create more opportunities for our community in our native language, so that we can also feel welcome”*]. They believed that creating these relationships would improve how they participate in IEP meetings because they would feel less intimidated after building trust with the teachers and the IEP team and would ask more questions about what is being presented to them instead of just passively participating. Many shared this sentiment and explained that they do not feel included and that their voices are often silenced by the language barrier.

Maria shared that, from her perspective, if schools established a trusting working relationship with parents, the school community would be more inclusive of all cultures. The rest of the mothers chimed in to add that they believe all cultures should be equally celebrated and welcomed in schools. Maria added,

Nos gustaría que nuestros hijos aprendieran más sobre su cultura, que aprendieran sobre los líderes latinos que ayudaron a contribuir a este país. A menudo sentimos que incomodamos a la gente al pedirles que se comuniquen en nuestro idioma y solicitar que nos incluyan.

We would like for our children to learn more about their culture, to learn about Latinx leaders that helped contribute to this country. We often feel like we are inconveniencing people by asking them to communicate in our language and requesting to be included.

The desire to have their culture represented was echoed amongst the participants. Lupe stated, *“Me gustaría que los profesores conocieran nuestra cultura. Me interesa saber lo que ocurre en el aula, pero los profesores rara vez me preguntan sobre nuestra cultura y cómo celebra mi hijo nuestras tradiciones.”* [“I would like for teachers to know our culture. I take interest in knowing what is happening in the classroom, but teachers rarely ask me about our culture and how my child celebrates our traditions.”] Carolina shared frustration for the lack of representation of Latinx parents in the school community *“Me gustaría ver a más padres latinos en la PTA, representando a aquellos que aún no pueden expresar su voz pero necesitan representación.”* [“I would like to see more Latinx parents in PTA, representing those that yet cannot express their voice but need representation.”]

Teachers and school administrators shape the environment that students spend the majority of their day in; within these environments, representation and respect for diverse communities, cultures, and ethnicities should exist. This would not only make students feel a sense of belonging, but also help parents feel valued, welcomed, and respected.

Theme Six: COVID-19

The mothers shared that the COVID-19 pandemic changed their experiences with their child’s school and most reported that it worsened the quality of education that their children received. They often felt that it negatively affected the way they felt about the communication with schools. The participants emphasized that COVID-19 regulations made them feel even more alienated and that the district mismanaged many protocols. Ana stated:

Covid lo cambió todo. Antes las reuniones del IEP duraban unas dos horas, ahora las apuran a una hora. Incluso después de que los alumnos volvieran a la escuela, no podíamos entrar en sus aulas. Nos sentimos tan alejados de las escuelas y no estamos al tanto de lo que nuestros hijos están aprendiendo.

Covid changed everything. Before IEP meetings lasted about two hours, now they rush them to one hour. Even after the students went back to school, we couldn't get into their classrooms. We feel so removed from the schools and not aware of what our children are learning.

Carmen, echoed Ana's concerns, but added that the quality of assessments and evaluations was also greatly affected during shelter-in-place. Carmen stated, "*Me han dicho que no es necesario que participe y que pueden tener la reunión sin mí. Me han dicho que pueden llamarme después para revisar lo ocurrido.*" [*"I have been told that I don't need to participate and they can have the meeting without me. They said that they can call me after to review what happened."*] Carolina shared that some of the parents that she had worked with in the community reported that some of their children were not being offered evaluations for their tri-annual assessments and that the assessments were instead completed by reviewing records of previous assessments and reports from children's former teachers. Tri-annual assessments are important because they take place every three years to evaluate and determine if a student is still eligible for special education and to develop a new IEP with appropriate recommendations based on the results of the assessments (The Wrightslaw Way, 2022).

Lupe shared that she struggled with her children re-entering school because she feared for their health on a daily basis. She shared that she chose not to be vaccinated during her pregnancy, but felt excluded and alienated more than before because she was not allowed to come to outings and be present in activities. Other participants shared similar frustrations about the protocols that prevented them from being present on school campus because schools needed

to control the amount of people in classrooms to lower any potential exposure to the children.

Anna stated,

“A menudo nos enterábamos de la exposición de nuestro hijo a alguien que estaba enfermo días después. La situación de las pruebas también era confusa, los lugares cambiaban a menudo y el protocolo de las pruebas no era coherente”

“We often found out of our child exposure to someone that was sick days after. The testing situation was confusing as well, the locations often changed, and the protocol for testing was not consistent”

Most participants reported feeling that the schools did the best they could but criticized the level of communication between the school administration and parents concerning protocols, testing, and positive cases on campus. They also criticized the level of communication they received regarding their child’s education. Some went on to allege that teachers utilized the COVID-19 protocols to avoid communicating with parents.

Summary

The analysis of this data shows that when Latinx parents receive the opportunity to become connected and informed about how the special education system works, they actively access resources and engage in transformative ways. They become more effective advocates for their children, not only in schools but across settings. Most important, they find ways to empower each other and build on skills that give them a voice not only for themselves but also on behalf of their children. The workshops provided the mothers an opportunity to organize toward a collective leadership and build alliances of support in their community with one another, and with their newly acquired knowledge, they were able to take their advocacy and participation from theory to action in schools in the community. Understanding the systemic barriers unique to Latinx parents in special education that prevent them from engaging and participating in special education IEP meetings can help inform practices and future research.

The mothers' stories not only demonstrate instances of challenges but also embody the ways these mothers used various forms of capital that they gained through their *familia* [kin] or *comunidad* [community] to navigate, advocate, and overcome challenges in the special education system when the system did not work for them or their children.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

In this concluding chapter, I will first present a detailed summary of the study. Second, I will offer a summary of the findings. Third, the limitations will be reviewed. Fourth, I will explore the results in-depth and situate them within the literature and theoretical frameworks to support the conclusions reached. Lastly, I will discuss the implications of the study for research and practice based on the findings.

Summary of Study

This qualitative case study aimed to examine Latinx parents' experiences navigating the special education process to identify and explore culturally responsive interventions that can increase parent participation and advocacy for their children with disabilities. The research focused on the participants' voices by giving them an opportunity to share their lived experiences and gain an understanding of the cultural factors unique to this population that affect their level of parent participation and advocacy for their children in special education. The participants' experiences offer valuable information about their perspectives on the factors that affect their ability to participate and advocate effectively for their children in special education. Therefore, this research was guided by the following research questions:

1. In what ways does a community-based workshop program for Latinx parents increase their IEP advocacy knowledge?
 - 1a. How can a parent-to-parent community-based workshop program provide support to Latinx parents in special education?
2. What are parents' perceptions of how they are included in the special education process of referral, evaluation, placement, and education planning?
 - 2a. How do parents' perceptions of school implementation of IEP services and practices impact parent involvement?

2b. What perceptions do Latinx parents have of the ways that schools structure opportunities for engagement for them and their children?

Over eight weeks, I conducted a weekly 90-minute workshop offered to Latinx parents with children in special education virtually over Zoom. Seven participants ranging from ages 30–50 years old were recruited. The participants were mothers who attended a community support group run by Sueños, a nonprofit agency in the Bay Area. Every week, the workshops covered topics that aimed to promote the participants' self-agency and strengthen their advocacy skills. For each workshop, I created a set of questions designed to elicit narratives and conversations from the participants that targeted their perceptions, lived experiences, and interventions that may help address obstacles that prevented them from engaging with school staff and IEP meetings. After the workshops concluded, the recordings of the workshops were reviewed and transcribed. The recordings were transcribed verbatim in Spanish to keep the essence of the participants' voices central to the study. The transcriptions were then coded through open and axial coding. Axial coding was purposefully used to analyze the data because it helped identify thematic relationships and situate them within theoretical models.

Summary of Findings

Open and axial coding was used to formulate themes in response to each research question (see Table 6). Overall, during the workshops, the participants were able to expand on their lived experiences and systemic barriers that hinder their advocacy and participation. Despite many of the systemic barriers that participants have faced, they expressed a great desire to participate in the development of their children's special education plans and in IEP meetings, as well as to improve communication with schools to support their children's academic

achievement. The following section will address the key findings that emerged from the data analysis related to each research question.

Table 6

Research Questions and Findings

Research Questions	Findings
1. In what ways does a community-based workshop program for Latinx parents increase their IEP advocacy knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cultivating confidence in parent advocacy ● Parent's roles and rights
1a. How can a parent-to-parent community-based workshop program provide support to Latinx parents in special education?	
2. What are parents' perceptions of how they are included in the special education process of referral, evaluation, placement, and education planning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interpretation services ● School-to-home communication ● Inclusion of culture ● COVID-19
2a. How do parents' perceptions of school implementation of IEP services and practices impact parent involvement?	
2b. What perceptions do Latinx parents/families have of the ways that schools structure opportunities for engagement for them and their children?	

Research Question One

Two themes arose when participants were asked about how a community-based workshop program could help increase their IEP advocacy knowledge and provide support. First, participants believed that the community-based workshop helped cultivate their confidence in

their advocacy. Second, the community-based workshop helped them better understand their roles and rights.

Cultivating Confidence in Parent Advocacy. The participants shared that learning skills to advocate for their children was essential for them. They often stated that lack of knowledge and skills hindered them from effectively advocating for their children. The participants described the workshop meetings as a place they felt “heard” and had a “sense of belonging” and that they were “building knowledge” and could “build on skills.” They deemed the workshops necessary because they were able to gain access to knowledge that otherwise would not be available to them. The mothers reported increased confidence after learning about skills and tools they could use when advocating for their children to increase their participation. They often cited feeling empowered by the other mothers in the group, and their encouragement increased their confidence in becoming an advocate for their children. One of the key features of the community-based workshops that the mothers mentioned was important to them was how the workshops presented information in a manner that helped them understand the IEP process in a way they were unable to before. Lack of information and knowledge leads to disempowerment; therefore, it is essential to create interventions that incorporate empowerment and enhance special education knowledge to create opportunities for Latinx families to become better advocates (Burke et al., 2020). The findings indicate that a community-based workshop for Latinx parents with children in special education is crucial because it allows them to have access to information and resources that help increase advocacy, self-agency, and overall empowerment.

Parent Roles and Rights. The second theme that emerged was the participants’ role as parents and their rights under IDEA. Most of the participants expressed that outside of the

workshops for this study, they have never had anyone sit down with them to talk about their rights, ways to exercise them, and the resources available to them. The participants noted that although they are offered their safeguards at the beginning of every meeting, they could not recall anyone from school administration or IEP teams explaining documents to them. They noted that they have glanced at the documents infrequently, but the amount of legal jargon makes it difficult for them to understand what they mean fully. Moreover, the participants stated that they welcome more information and ways to access more knowledge because they want to have a voice and know that their children need them to advocate for them to succeed. They often made it a point to state that education is very important to them, and they noted the urgency that they do not want their children to “fall behind” in academics and therefore have fewer opportunities in the future to better themselves. Consistent with Quezada et al. (2003), participants noted that due to their unfamiliarity with the special education system and legal rights, they are often reluctant to question the authority of teachers or other IEP members. Therefore, they often do not question decisions made over their children's education plans. Instead, they often engaged in a passive role rather than acting as advocates. The findings from this research indicate that if Latinx parents gain more knowledge about the system, they can become more assertive in their roles as active participants in IEP meetings and the overall decision about their children’s special education plan.

Research Question Two

Research Question 2 focused on the participants’ perception of how they are included in the special education process, the implementation of IEP services, and how schools structure opportunities for engagement. Four themes arose that directly impact their perception, attention,

and advocacy. Those four themes were: (a) interpretation services, (b) school-to-home communication, (c) inclusion of culture, and (d) COVID-19.

Interpretation Services. The findings revealed that language is a significant obstacle to Latinx parent involvement. It is especially troubling that the findings from this research exhibit that there is a barrier to parents accessing documents related to their children's education, assessments, and other IEP-related documents in a timely manner or at all. Due to a lack of appropriate interpretation services, participants reported that they often felt left out in meetings, silenced, and unable to have the needs of their children and their concerns addressed. Hart et al. (2012), Cho and Gannoti (2005), Klinger and Harry (2006), and Salas (2004) support the result found in this study, which suggests that parents of diverse backgrounds and languages often cite poor translation and interpretation services as challenges that result in them feeling marginalized and as though their input is not valued or sought after from IEP members.

A study conducted by Rossetti et al. (2020) posits that parents with limited English proficiency and parents who could speak English fluently had difficulties understanding the terminology used in special education meetings. These parents also often reported having difficulty in processing the information layered with the pressure of participating in what they perceive as high-stake meetings that could directly impact their children (Rossetti et al., 2020). The data from this study suggest that not having access to appropriate interpretation services and documents translated into a language that parents understand makes Latinx parents feel excluded, silenced, and as though their opinion does not have value to the team. Therefore, it creates a perception of a power imbalance, where teachers and schools can make decisions without their input. Parents often may not have enough information about their children to make an educated decision about their children's special education plans. Lack of access to

information, inability to understand information, or inability to express themselves in meetings appropriately affects how parents communicate, increases their perception of feeling isolated and silenced, and influences how they establish interpersonal connections between the staff and parents.

School to Home Communication. Another theme closely related to the language barrier was parents' ability to establish relationships with their children's teachers or school staff. The participants shared that they often felt teachers did not reach out to them until they (the participant) first attempted to establish a conversation with them. Most of the time, a conversation happened months into the school year. Participants stated that they perceived teachers' lack of interest in establishing communication with them as a sign of disrespect and felt the teachers did not care about their children. Buren et al. (2021) also found that mothers often took the lead to open communication with teachers through face-to-face meetings to build trust and in attempts to establish communication reciprocity. Most participants reported that they often found out during their first parent-teacher conference of the year that their children's teachers were unaware that their children had IEPs. This increased mistrust and fear because they were not sure whether their children were receiving the appropriate support and accommodations necessary for them to learn. This perception can lead to a bigger problem contributing to the disconnection Latinx parents feel from their children's schools, which often can influence parents' choice to participate or communicate with school staff, hindering their ability to participate or advocate for their children. It was clear from the mothers that they wanted to connect with teachers or IEP team members to guide them on ways or tools to help their children better. As Salas (2004) posited, language difference should not be considered a deficiency by

school personnel because it could erode the collaboration between parents and schools, consequently affecting students' overall academic success.

Inclusion of Culture. Cultural differences and lack of access to resources to improve their knowledge about school involvement and participation often surfaced in this study. Cultural differences came up in two ways. The first cultural difference that emerged was related to parents' unfamiliarity with parental involvement. Participants reported that outside of the workshop, no one explained how to participate in their children's special education. They noted that the workshops opened their minds to knowledge not available to them before that culturally showed what it meant to be involved to ensure their children did their homework at home. However, their desire to help them and their experience of witnessing their children falling behind built a sense of frustration that led them to feel they needed to advocate for their children one way or another. They often felt their options were limited. They did not know how to do it because they lacked the tools, words, or knowledge to advocate appropriately. Second, the mothers expressed their desire to feel included, valued, and welcomed in their children's school community. They conveyed the need to feel as though their culture is also valued, so their children can have incentives to continue to progress academically if they learn about Latinx historical figures that have made a difference in society. The mothers welcomed opportunities to interface with school staff so they could participate in celebrating Latinx culture.

COVID-19. An unprecedented theme that emerged during this study was the effect that COVID-19 had on parents' participation. In March 2020, the novel coronavirus outbreak was declared a global pandemic that resulted in the transition to remote learning for schools worldwide. The participants shared that COVID-19 became another barrier they had to endure. Language continued to be a barrier layered with COVID-19 because parents had challenges

communicating with teachers directly. Parents reported often feeling disempowered because they could not communicate with teachers to advocate for their children and report needs and wants for additional support. Alba et al. (2022) referred to a survey conducted by Neece et al. (2020) in which Latinx parents reported decreased services for their children and felt that during the pandemic, the biggest challenge was their children's unmet educational needs.

Consistent with Alba et al. (2022), participants in this study reported that the change from school-based education to homeschooling contributed to their constant worry about their children's academic progress becoming stagnant or regressing. In addition, they were concerned about the effects of their children being isolated from their peers and school environment, which could also make them regress socially. Some participants reported that their children did not receive the same attention and support they would have if they had accessed school in person.

Limitations

One limitation of this study is the relatively small number of participants in the sample. Due to the small sample, it was difficult to widen the range of perspectives on the topic and include more viewpoints. Furthermore, due to the small sample, the data only pertained to experiences within one school district. A larger sample would consist of participants from different school districts and would have provided additional responses that could have refuted or validated the findings in this study. A second limitation was COVID-19. Due to health guidelines, all meetings took place over Zoom. Due to the nature of virtual meetings and access to reliable internet services, some participants were not consistently able to turn on their cameras, hindering their ability to reciprocate nonverbal communication such as facial expressions. In-person meetings could have enhanced engagement, which could have provided additional opportunities for narratives and responses. A third limitation is the short length of the study (e.g.,

eight weeks), which affected the interpretation of the findings. A more extended study could provide a richer data set that includes additional perspectives, observations, and field notes that capture possible changes in advocacy over time and across settings.

Discussion of Findings

In this study, I used critical race theory (CRT) and Community Cultural Wealth theory as theoretical frameworks to examine the experiences that affect Latinx parent engagement and advocacy in special education. Critical theorizing helps unpack social realities to understand how to improve them at a micro and macro level (Valdes, 2001). CRT is one of the two frameworks in this study to address the inequities and disparities in education regarding parent participation in special education. Parent participation in special education remains a frequent topic of discussion. Despite the rhetoric from IDEA that parents of children with disabilities have a vital role in their child's special education, this study shows that Latinx parents' voices are often silenced or excluded through systemic procedures and bureaucratic requirements disregarding their knowledge and cultural capital. Parent participation in the special education process is often influenced by issues related to parents' linguistic and cultural diversity (i.e., knowledge of the U.S. schooling system, legal knowledge, and questioning teachers' decision-making). I outline key studies related to special education inequities affecting Latinx parent participation and advocacy in this study. Drawing from a CRT framework, I center Latinx parents' voices as a legitimate source of knowledge about their experience with inequity and asymmetrical power relations in special education.

The idea that parents are inherently welcome in schools and their rights are guaranteed by their legal safeguards is a hegemonic school-controlled process that, through systemic barriers, such as language and knowledge, devalues and excludes Latinx parents' voices. A CRT

theoretical lens challenges dominant notions and understanding through counternarratives of nondominant groups of people who are marginalized by race and other forms of oppression (Barajas-López & Ishimaru, 2020). By providing parents a place to discuss the issues that prevent their participation in their child's meetings, I highlighted the barriers and problems that districts and schools often overlook as they disregard entirely how these barriers are being addressed to enable parents' communication and participation. The workshops provided a place for the participants to engage in discourse and share their knowledge, perspectives, and cultures, proving that parents innately can engage in important conversations regarding their children's education. The findings suggest that parents have important insights, knowledge, and expertise, which could be a rich source of information for educators to create a more inclusive classroom environment. Moreover, my findings suggest that although parents have faced many systemic barriers that hinder their level of participation, the narratives in this study show that that has not been a reason for them to give up; instead, the mothers reported that their experiences had motivated them to be persistent, seek help when they cannot communicate with the school, and most of all, utilize community resources as support for knowledge that they can apply while navigating their children's special education.

Community cultural wealth serves as a tool to reframe deficit discourses that dismiss the cultural capital that exists in communities of color. Instead, "community cultural wealth highlights the different types of capital that exist in these communities and the ways they apply them daily while navigating oppressive systems and to overcome obstacles" (Yosso, 2005, p. 76). Cultural wealth models maintain that Latinx families use various forms of capital fostered by aspirational, linguistic, social, navigational, familial, and resistant wealth to resist and navigate oppression and discrimination experienced in special education (Martinez et al., 2018).

By applying community cultural wealth as a framework in this study, I have elicited a new way to view parental involvement in special education that goes beyond the traditional paradigm, recognizing the strengths and preexisting knowledge that Latinx parents bring to their engagement, advocacy, and involvement with their children's special education.

Through this framework, I have placed the mothers' experiences within the context of the barriers they faced in school environments that did not appear to value their cultures, knowledge, and language and often made them passive participants. The mothers transmitted messages of hope and support for one another, which essentially resulted in the assumption that they all had the agency to advocate, address, and solve the challenges they individually faced while navigating the special education system. As a result, the mothers encouraged each other to take action and not accept the systemic barriers they faced as insurmountable absolutes that dictated their advocacy or participation.

Most importantly, this framework also supports the idea that making environments culturally relevant and responsive can create safe spaces that can become transformational for Latinx parents. Because this study focused on lived experiences and nourished existing knowledge that the mothers possessed, I witnessed how small steps to transformation can have a very powerful effect. Through their narratives, experiences, and testimonials, I had the opportunity to witness how the mothers built on cultural wealth by becoming familial support and resources to one another and solving problems together.

Lastly, Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth theory provided a lens that demonstrates how a community-based program helps build safe spaces and strong relationships to engage Latinx families in culturally responsive ways. The findings from this study suggest that placing value in the capital that Latinx families already possess provides a sense of

inclusion, empowerment, and voice that local schools have not been able to provide for Latinx families, resulting in Latinx parents often engaging in passive roles that affect their advocacy and participation in their child's special education development.

Implications for Research

This study suggests that new opportunities emerge for educational research when schools draw from the expertise of Latinx families and non-dominant communities. Centering non-dominant families' voices can be a starting point for understanding and dignifying Latinx parents' roles as their children's experts. I posit that researchers, in partnership with Latinx families and their communities, can offer solutions to problems that hinder Latinx parents' participation, involvement, and advocacy. Through these paradigms, researchers can share and observe the experiences of dismissal and silencing that Latinx parents face who are struggling to exercise their rights and advocate for their children's education. Their narratives, stories, and experiences interrupt systemic practices that undermine equity.

Future research and practice in this field can transform current institutional practices to address the structures that exclude Latinx parents' voices from special education and hinder their advocacy efforts. It is necessary for research in education to center Latinx parents' voices to begin to move educational systems toward equity. Future researchers need to examine counter-stories' effect in building interventions to increase Latinx parent participation, which could lead to and foster parent involvement and advocacy. Counternarratives are a culturally responsive approach that can help parents increase assertive skills they can use in IEP meetings to help them achieve a desired goal (Larios & Zetlin, 2022).

Future researchers should also examine how the perception of teachers and administration influence Latinx parent participation in IEP meetings. Arzubiaga et al. (2008)

argue that attention needs to be paid to institutional cultures, because this can help understand how inequities are maintained and influence allocation of resources that perpetuate stereotyping and limit learning opportunities for students of color in special education. Waitoller and Artiles (2016), further support this by arguing that instead of only learning about accommodations and modifications,” teachers should learn how to dismantle intersecting forms of inclusion misdistribution, misrecognition, and misrepresentation” (P.360).

Implications for Practice

This study makes clear that a gap remains between what parents are offered as their legal safeguard through IDEA and how schools implement practices to ensure Latinx parent participation in a reciprocal manner, ensure opportunities for Latinx parents to interact with school staff and teachers, and include their opinions in the decision-making process regarding their children’s specialized education plan. I posit several ways to do so.

Improve Interpretation Services

It is notable that parents often do not have access to quality interpretation services. Lack of quality interpretation services often causes parents to feel isolated, silenced, and excluded from the decision-making in their child’s education plan. Improving parents’ access to interpretation services is vital for their participation. More et al. (2013) offered the following three interventions to enhance communication between parents and teachers through interpretation services:

- Teachers should collaborate with interpreters to create a summary of important IEP components for parents and a note of encouragement to contact the school.
- Teachers should collaborate with interpreters to provide parents with a timeline of when to expect translated copies of IEP documents and other related documents.

- Teachers should work directly with interpreter services to ensure that IEP documents are translated in a timely manner.

Doing so would enable parents to communicate effectively in meetings, express their concerns, and voice their needs. They would also have the necessary information to participate in and become active members of the IEP team. Providing necessary documents before a meeting would allow the parents to read them, take notes to ask questions, and have all the information they need to contribute to ideas and interventions that could help their children.

Reciprocal communication through an interpreter would give parents the perception that their opinion matters and they are part of the team. When parents can participate in meetings through adequate interpretation services, they can become part of the team and collaborate with teachers, thereby building a sense of community with their child's IEP team. It is evident through the parent's level of participation in the workshops that if they have an opportunity to ask questions and feel respect and trust, they can share their insights and knowledge, which are invaluable to their children's success.

Improve Home–School Partnership

Mapp and Kurtner (2013) suggested that educators often receive little training and few tools to create meaningful engagement with culturally diverse families. To establish effective communication and authentic relationships with Latinx families, school administrators, staff, and teachers must move away from transitional home–school partnerships. Schools ought to establish a system in which teachers have time to reach out to parents in a way that is accessible to the parent and in a language with which the parent is comfortable. This system should include multiple interventions and strategies to communicate regularly with Latinx or culturally diverse parents. Schools ought to organize IEP meetings in a way that creates space for parents to be

heard, promotes a genuine interest in the parents' strengths, and builds on those benefits to create a working collaboration.

Collective/Collaborative

A partnership between school and community-based programs that serve Latinx parents is important to create learning communities for Latinx parents who have children in special education. Through a partnership with community programs, schools have an opportunity to reach out to parents in the community who typically do not feel safe participating in school activities or meetings. The goal of a community–school partnership would be to improve parents' access to resources and services from community programs to help strengthen school programs and practices. The community-based workshops offered in this study were often referred to as a valuable source of knowledge for parents who noted that they had not had the opportunity for someone to teach them about the special education process. Initiatives that bring families and school staff together for a shared learning opportunity can foster trust, communication, and collaboration.

Conclusion

This study's results challenge negative perceptions surrounding Latinx parents and their participation in their children's special education. The workshops were not only intended to teach the mothers about the special education process, but also to utilize this area of need and interest to help the Latinx community access information and resources and to address issues they faced. By acknowledging the multiple issues that Latinx families face in navigating the special education system and developing solutions to address them, the workshops gave the mothers the message that their voices mattered. Findings from previous studies (Delgado Gaitan, 2007; Ditrano & Silverstein Bordeaux, 2006; Kalyanpur, 1997) and this one suggest that Latinx

parents have high expectations for their children's education and want to participate in their children's educational process and success. A one-size-fits-all approach to parent involvement is not inclusive of culturally diverse parents. Despite their lived experiences with the special education system that has repeatedly made them feel marginalized, the mothers in this study exhibited a resolute commitment to learning and becoming advocates for change on their children's behalf. This study's results will provide parents and educators with tools and awareness of the work needed to affect change in Latinx parent participation and advocacy in special education. The participants' lived experiences in this study provide an understanding of the barriers Latinx families experience in the special education system and how community-based programs are critical to mobilizing change in the community.

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Appendix A

Transcript of Verbal Consent for Participation in Research

1. Hello, my name is Gabriela Perez. I am a graduate student working with Dr. Xornam Apedoe, Associate Professor of the School of Education at the University of San Francisco. We are conducting a study to examine Latino parents' experiences in the special education process, with the aim of identifying and exploring culturally responsive interventions that can increase parent participation and advocacy for their children with disabilities.
2. You are being asked to participate in this research study because you have identified as being a parent of a child in special education. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked questions about your experiences in navigating the special education system, your perceptions about your child's individualized education plan, and your overall relationship and communication with your child's school.
3. Some of the questions asked may make you feel uncomfortable, but you are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. You can also stop participation at any time. All the records for this study will be kept as confidential as possible. Although participants will not be asked to put their names on any paperwork, participation in research may mean a loss of confidentiality. The use of pseudonyms and pseudo-locations will be used to keep individuals' identities as confidential as possible. The individual identities of participants will not be used in any report or publication resulting from this study. All information pertaining to this study will be kept lock and password protected at all times. The information from this study will be coded and reviewed only by the study's personnel.
4. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you will not be reimbursed for your participation. You are free to decline participation in this study or withdraw from the study at any time. There will be no cost to you for participate in this study.
5. If you have any further questions about the research, please contact me at (650)270-0383. You may also contact IRBPHS at the University of San Francisco at (415)422-6091, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects.

Appendix B

Transcripción del consentimiento verbal para participar en la investigación

1. Hola, mi nombre es Gabriela Pérez. Soy una estudiante graduada que trabaja con el Dr. Xornam Apedoe, profesora asociada de la Escuela de Educación de la Universidad de San Francisco. Estamos llevando a cabo un estudio para examinar las experiencias de los padres latinos en el proceso de educación especial, con el objetivo de identificar y explorar las intervenciones culturalmente sensibles que pueden aumentar la participación de los padres y la defensa de sus hijos con discapacidades.
2. Se le pide que participe en este estudio de investigación porque se ha identificado como padre de un niño en educación especial. Si está de acuerdo en participar en este estudio, se le harán preguntas sobre sus experiencias al navegar por el sistema de educación especial, sus percepciones sobre el plan de educación individualizado de su hijo, y su relación y comunicación general con la escuela de su hijo.
3. Algunas de las preguntas que se le hagan pueden hacerle sentir incómodo, pero usted es libre de negarse a responder a cualquier pregunta que no desee contestar. También puede dejar de participar en cualquier momento. 4. Todos los registros de este estudio se mantendrán tan confidenciales como sea posible. Aunque no se pedirá a los participantes que pongan su nombre en ningún documento, la participación en la investigación puede suponer una pérdida de confidencialidad. Se utilizarán seudónimos y seudolocalizaciones para mantener la identidad de los individuos lo más confidencial posible. Las identidades individuales de los participantes no se utilizarán en ningún informe o publicación resultante de este estudio. Toda la información relativa a este estudio se mantendrá protegida con candado y contraseña en todo momento. La información de este estudio será codificada y revisada únicamente por el personal del estudio.
2. Su participación en este estudio es voluntaria y no se le reembolsará por su participación. Usted es libre de rechazar su participación en este estudio o de retirarse del mismo en cualquier momento. No habrá ningún coste para usted por participar en este estudio.
3. Si tiene alguna otra pregunta sobre la investigación, póngase en contacto conmigo en el (650)270-0383. También puede ponerse en contacto con el IRBPHS de la Universidad de San Francisco en el (415)422-6091, que se ocupa de la protección de los voluntarios en los proyectos de investigación.

Appendix C
Workshop Handouts



Artwork by Ernesto Yerena Montejano

Rompiendo Barreras: taller para familias con hijos en educación especial



Indice de Contenidos

Taller 1: Que es Un Plan Individualizado de Educación	P 1
Taller 2: Proceso y Recursos del IEP	P 4
Taller 3: Consejos Para Mejorar la Comunicación con la Escuela de sus hijos.....	P7
Taller 4: Participación de los padres	P 9
Taller 5 : Derechos de los padre.....	P 12
Taller 6 : Recursos comunitarios.....	P 15
Taller 7: Tema dirigido por las Familias	P 16
Taller 8: Reflexión sobre el taller.....	P 17

Taller 1: Que es un Plan Individualizado de Educación (IEP)

Que es un IEP?

- ◆ Un IEP es un plan diseñado específicamente para atender las necesidades de aprendizaje de su hijo.
- ◆ El IEP está diseñado para identificar los objetivos de aprendizaje de su hijo para el próximo año
- ◆ El IEP identifica las adaptaciones y el apoyo que todos deben seguir para que su hijo aprenda

Cronologia de el IEP

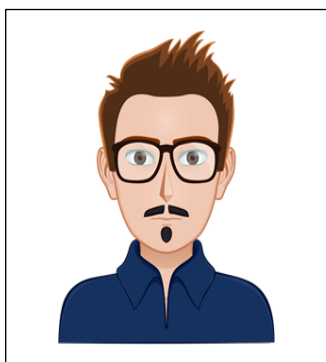
- Los padres pueden solicitar una remisión para una evaluación (también conocida como valoración) para la educación especial escribiendo una carta al profesor del niño, al director o a la oficina de educación especial.

- El distrito debe entregar a los padres una propuesta de plan de evaluación y una copia de los derechos procesales de los padres dentro de los 15 días siguientes a la recepción de la solicitud de evaluación. Código de Educación de Cal. Código de Educación § 56321(a).

- Tras recibir el plan, los padres tienen al menos 15 días para decidir si están de acuerdo con el plan de evaluación propuesto. Código de Educación de California § 56321(c)(4). Educ. § 56321(c)(4).

- El distrito tiene entonces 60 días para completar la evaluación y organizar una reunión del IEP. Código de Educación de Cal. Educ. §§ 56302.1, 56344.

Miembros del Equipo del IEP



Los educadores especiales en el equipo del IEP



Los educadores de Educación general



Un representante del sistema escolar



Alguien que interprete los resultados de la



Otras personas con conocimientos o experiencia especial sobre



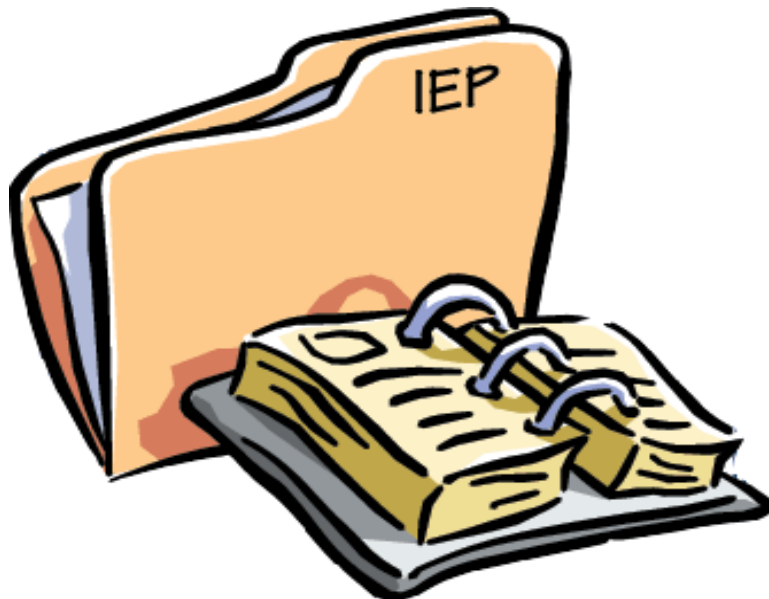
Alumno, cuando es apropiado



Los padres/tutores en el equipo del IEP

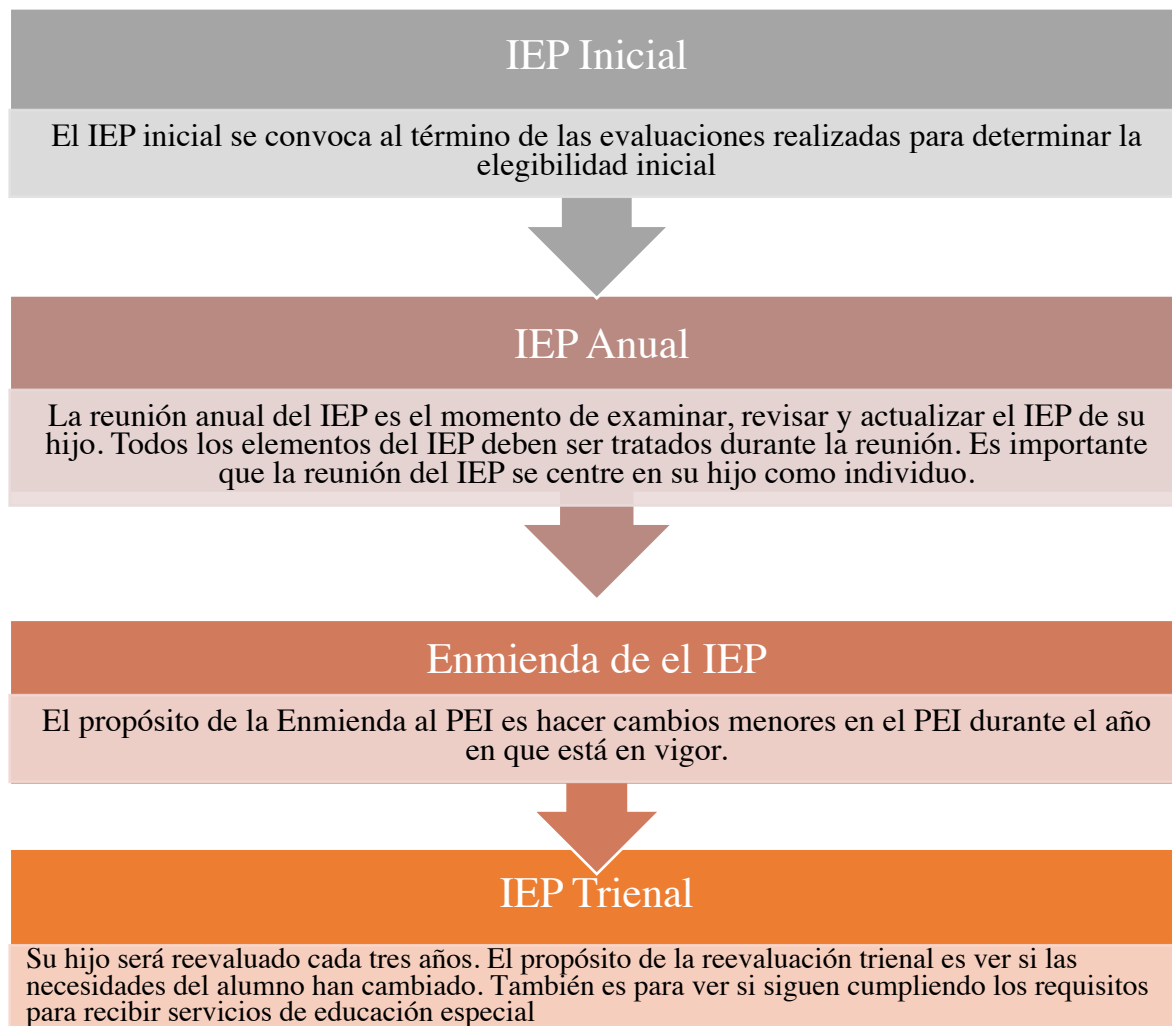
El Contenido de un IEP

- ◆ Información / Elegibilidad
- ◆ Nivel actual de rendimiento académico y funcional
- ◆ Factores especiales
- ◆ Hoja de reclasificación del idioma inglés
- ◆ Evaluaciones estatales
- ◆ Metas y objetivos anuales
- ◆ Oferta de Educación Pública Apropriada y Gratuita
- ◆ Notas
- ◆ Firma y consentimiento de los padres



Taller 2: Proceso y recursos del IEP

Tipos de IEP



Categorías de elegibilidad

discapacidades intelectuales;

deficiencias auditivas (incluida la sordera)

deficiencias del habla o del lenguaje

deficiencias visuales (incluida la ceguera)

trastornos emocionales

discapacidades ortopédicas

autismo

lesión cerebral traumática

otras deficiencias de salud

discapacidades específicas de aprendizaje

retraso en el desarrollo.

Diferentes Tipos de Apoyos

Educación especial

Instrucciones de adaptación

Se pueden hacer modificaciones a:

- ◆ lo que se le enseña a un niño, y/o
- ◆ la forma en que el niño trabaja en la escuela.

Servicios relacionados

- ◆ servicios de logopedia y audiología
- ◆ servicios de interpretación
- ◆ servicios psicológicos
- ◆ fisioterapia y terapia ocupacional
- ◆ recreación, incluida la recreación terapéutica
- ◆ identificación y evaluación temprana de discapacidades en niños
- ◆ servicios de asesoramiento, incluido el asesoramiento en materia de rehabilitación
- ◆ servicios de orientación y movilidad
- ◆ servicios médicos con fines de diagnóstico o evaluación
- ◆ servicios de salud escolar y servicios de enfermería escolar
- ◆ servicios de trabajo social en las escuelas

Ayudas y servicios complementarios

- ◆ equipos adaptados
- ◆ tecnología de asistencia
- ◆ formación para el personal, los estudiantes y/o los padres
- ◆ tutores entre pares
- ◆ un ayudante individual
- ◆ materiales adaptados, como libros grabados, letra grande o notas resaltadas; y
- ◆ colaboración/consulta entre el personal, los padres y/o otros profesionales.

Acomodación en evaluaciones y exámenes de gran envergadura



Taller 3: Consejos Para Mejorar la Comunicación con la Escuela de su hijo

- ◆ Es una buena idea mantener un cuaderno designado con la información de su hijo, los contactos de la escuela y las notas de las reuniones del IEP
- ◆ Crea un correo electrónico. Anote cuál es su correo electrónico y su contraseña. Asegúrate de ofrecer tu dirección de correo electrónico al personal de la escuela.
- ◆ Asegúrate de que el buzón de voz de tu teléfono está configurado y puedes recibir mensajes de voz.
- ◆ Siempre que tengas una conversación con el personal de la escuela. Asegúrate de anotar siempre quién es la persona, su función y cuándo tuvo lugar la conversación.
- ◆ Cuando dejes un mensaje de voz:
 - Asegúrate de informar sobre el motivo de tu llamada.
 - Pide una cita en persona si es necesario
 - Cuando pidas que te devuelvan la llamada, asegúrate de informar de tu disponibilidad.
- ◆ Antes de asistir a una reunión en la escuela, debes hacer las siguientes preguntas:
 - Si hay algún documento específico que deba llevar
 - Si va a recibir documentos antes de la reunión, pregunte cuándo debe esperarlos
 - Anote la fecha de la reunión y programe una alarma en su teléfono para que no se le olvide. Si no, anótelos en un calendario que esté a su disposición

Registro de Comunicaciones

Es una Buena práctica llevar un registro de todas las Comunicaciones que tenga con la escuela de hijo y los motivos de la comunicación. Más Adelante, si tiene alguna duda puede consultar esta información y discutir sus preocupaciones.

Fecha	Personal Escolar Contactado	Motivo

Taller 4: Participación de los padres

Toma de notas del IEP

Es una buena práctica tomar nota de quiénes asisten, el motivo del IEP, las recomendaciones, los puntos fuertes y las áreas de necesidad

Fecha del IEP _____

Miembros del equipo que asisten y su papel en el equipo del IEP _____

Motivo del IEP (inicial/anual, trianual, modificación/transición) _____

Puntos fuertes _____

Áreas de necesidad _____

Recomendaciones _____

Objetivos completados _____

Objetivos en curso _____

Seguimiento _____

Próxima reunión del IEP _____

Notas:

Lista de pasos claves del IEP

- ◆ Se puede solicitar una reunión del PEI en cualquier momento
- ◆ La reunión del IEP debe programarse en un momento acordado
- ◆ Puede solicitar los resultados y recomendaciones de una evaluación antes de la reunión del IEP
- ◆ Puede solicitar una copia del orden del día de la reunión del IEP y pedir que se añadan sus puntos
- ◆ Revisar los expedientes de su hijo y asegurarse de que conoce todos los servicios que se prestan.
- ◆ Haga una lista de preguntas que le gustaría que se respondieran
- ◆ Tome notas durante la reunión del IEP
- ◆ Comparta los puntos fuertes y las habilidades de su hijo
- ◆ Mantenga el enfoque en las necesidades de su hijo
- ◆ Colabore en la presentación de las opciones
- ◆ Pida aclaraciones si algo no está claro
- ◆ Obtenga copias de todas las notas de la reunión, del IEP y de las evaluaciones
- ◆ Aclare las mejores maneras de comunicarse con la escuela, proporcione toda la información de contacto actualizada
- ◆ Programe la próxima reunión a una hora que le convenga a usted y al equipo del IEP

CONOZCA LA ESCUELA DE SU HIJO

NOMBRE DEL DISTRITO ESCOLAR _____

NOMBRE DE LA ESCUELA _____

DIRECCIÓN DE LA ESCUELA _____

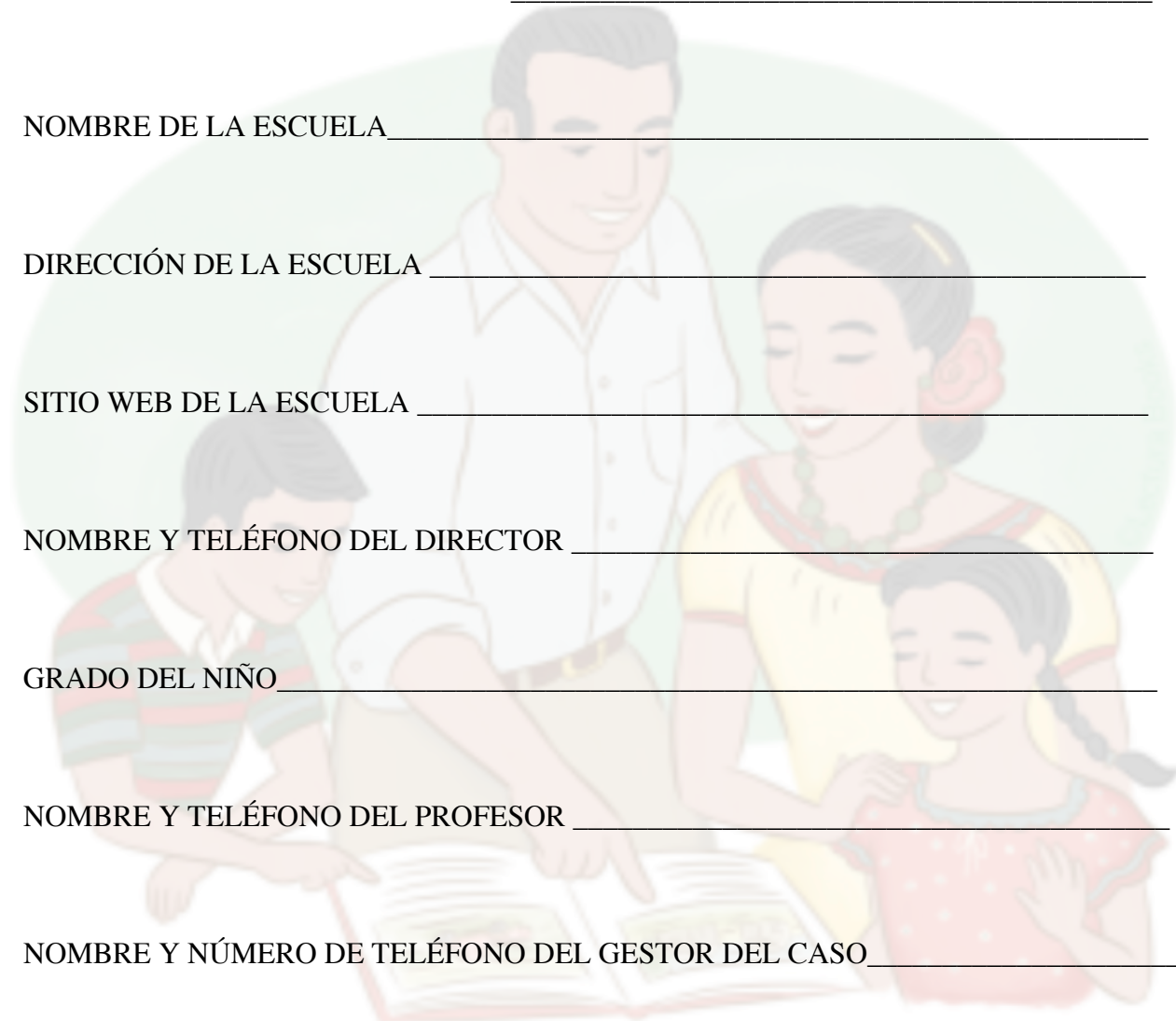
SITIO WEB DE LA ESCUELA _____

NOMBRE Y TELÉFONO DEL DIRECTOR _____

GRADO DEL NIÑO _____

NOMBRE Y TELÉFONO DEL PROFESOR _____

NOMBRE Y NÚMERO DE TELÉFONO DEL GESTOR DEL CASO _____



Taller 5 : Derechos de los padre

Guía de Recursos para Padres - Los Derechos de los Padres* (Salvoconductos de Procedimiento)

Como padre usted tiene derecho a:

- Pedir una evaluación para determinar si su niño es elegible para Educación Especial
- Que se le de un plan de evaluación (para su revisión y consentimiento) dentro de 15 días de su petición para evaluación
- Que no se evalúe a su estudiante si no está de acuerdo con el plan de evaluación
- Ser notificado por escrito si el distrito determina que una evaluación no es garantizada
- Que su niño sea evaluado en todas las áreas donde se sospeche discapacidad
- Recibir una notificación de reunión para IEP con fecha, hora y lugar de mutuo acuerdo y de manera anticipada (generalmente dentro de 60 días después de que firmó el plan de evaluación)
- Pedir un intérprete si usted necesita uno para entender lo que se está diciendo en la reunión
- Traer personas de su elección a la reunión de IEP (notifique al distrito por escrito anticipadamente)
- Grabar la reunión de IEP (notificar al distrito por escrito anticipadamente)
- Ser notificado por escrito si a su estudiante se le encuentra inelegible para servicios de Educación Especial
- Que se le de un reporte por escrito que resuma los resultados de las evaluaciones
- Participar en la reunión de IEP para determinar elegibilidad y servicios apropiados para su niño
- Compartir información relevante acerca de su niño con el equipo de IEP
- Haber implementado los servicios y apoyos estipulados en el IEP dentro de un tiempo razonable
- Pedir más reuniones del equipo de IEP cuando usted crea sean necesarias (el distrito tiene 30 días para acomodar estas peticiones)
- Pedir que el distrito escolar trabaje hacia resolver desacuerdos, si estos surgen
- Esperar que los documentos del estudiante generados en la reunión de IEP se mantendrán confidenciales y serán compartidos con otras agencias solamente si es permitido por la ley o con su consentimiento
- Los padres pueden firmar su asistencia a la reunión de IEP, pero pueden retener el derecho a revisar mas adelante el IEP antes de firmar/dar por aceptado el ofrecimiento de FAPE por el distrito

San Mateo County SELPA – Resource Parent Council – 10/12

*Para obtener información completa de Los Derechos de los Padres refiérase a "Aviso de Garantías Procesales" disponible en la página web de la Oficina de Educación del Condado de San Mateo u obtenga copias de la oficina de su distrito escolar local.

Servicios de traducción e interpretación

Debe informar a la escuela, antes de la reunión del IEP, de que necesitará proporcionar un intérprete cualificado para la reunión. Recuerde que los distritos escolares tienen la obligación de garantizar que usted tenga la oportunidad de participar de manera significativa durante las reuniones del IEP y que pueda entender adecuadamente lo que se discute en las reuniones del IEP.

- ◆ Documentos que se deben proporcionar en su idioma de preferencia:
- ◆ Consentimiento de los padres para la evaluación
- ◆ Consentimiento de los padres para iniciar los servicios de educación especial
- ◆ Consentimiento de los padres para excusar a un miembro del equipo del IEP de una reunión del IEP
- ◆ Notificación previa por escrito cuando la escuela propone o rechaza iniciar o cambiar la identificación, evaluación o colocación del alumno
- ◆ Notificación de las garantías procesales
- ◆ Evaluaciones

DERECHOS DE LOS PADRES EN VIRTUD DE IDEA

- ◆ El derecho de los padres a recibir una explicación completa de todas las salvaguardias procesales disponibles en virtud de la ley IDEA y los procedimientos del estado para presentar quejas
- ◆ La confidencialidad y el derecho de los padres a inspeccionar y revisar los registros educativos de su hijo
- ◆ El derecho de los padres a participar en las reuniones relacionadas con la identificación, evaluación y colocación de su hijo, y la provisión de FAPE (una educación pública gratuita y apropiada) para su hijo
- ◆ El derecho de los padres a obtener una evaluación educativa independiente (IEE) de su hijo
- ◆ El derecho de los padres a recibir una "notificación previa por escrito" sobre asuntos relacionados con la identificación, evaluación o colocación de su hijo, y la provisión de FAPE a su hijo
- ◆ El derecho de los padres a dar o negar su consentimiento antes de que la escuela pueda tomar ciertas medidas con respecto a su hijo
- ◆ El derecho de los padres a no estar de acuerdo con las decisiones tomadas por el sistema escolar sobre estas cuestiones
- ◆ El derecho de los padres y de las escuelas a utilizar los mecanismos de IDEA para resolver conflictos, incluido el derecho a apelar la determinación

Reference: Parent Center Hub. *Rights to Receive a Complete Explanation of IDEA's Procedural Safeguards*. Retrieved from <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/parental-rights/>

Taller 6 : Recursos comunitarios

Children's Council San Francisco

445 Church Street, San Francisco, CA 94114 Front Desk : (415)276-2900
Resource and Referral Line: (415)3432-3300 <http://www.childrenscouncil.org>

Community Alliance for Special Education

1550 Bryant Street, Suite 735, San Francisco, CA 94103 (p): (415)431-2285
<http://www.caseadvocacy.org>

Instituto Familiar de la Raza

2919 Mission Street., San Francisco, CA 94110 (p): (415)229-0500
<http://ifrsf.org/about-us/>

Parents Helping Parents

1400 Parkmoor Ave., Ste 100, San Jose, CA (p) (408)727-5775
<http://www.php.com>

Support for Families of Children with Disabilities

1663 Mission St., 7th floor, San Francisco, CA 94103 P: (415)920-5040
<http://www.supportforfamilies.org>

Taller 7: Tema dirigido por las Familias



Artwork by : Favianna Rodriguez

Taller 8: Reflexión sobre el taller



Artwork by; Ernesto Yerena Montejano

Appendix D

Workshop Questions for discussion with Latinx Parents

English Version

1. How long has your child had special education services? (Workshop 1)
2. Do you know what disability your child qualifies under for special education Services? (Workshop 1)
3. What's your understanding of your child's disability? (workshop 2)
4. What has your experience being like raising a child with disability? (workshop 2)
5. Do you normally attend IEP meetings? (Workshop 2)
6. Do you feel like assessments and evaluations are explained to you in a way you understand? (Workshop 2)
7. Do you feel you understand the information provided to you during an IEP meeting? (Workshop 3)
8. What can your IEP team do in order to make you feel more connected and involved during an IEP meeting? (Workshop 4)
9. In your opinion, what does it mean to be involved in your child's education? (Workshop 4)
10. What do you think is the most important thing you can do to help your child's academic progress based on their IEP goals? (Workshop 4)
11. What factors do you think impact your involvement in your child's IEP meetings? (Workshop 5)
12. In your opinion what role do you think attending workshops to increase your special education knowledge has had on increasing your participation in the IEP process in your child's school? (Workshop 5)
13. What do you wish school staff/teachers would know (or do) to better support Latino parents with special needs children? (workshop 5)
14. In your opinion do you feel like your child's school promotes or maintains your cultural needs? (workshop 5)
15. What skills do you think you will be able to apply from this workshop in IEP meetings in the future? (Workshop 8)

16. What ways did this workshop help you increase your knowledge about your rights/resources? (Workshop 8)

Appendix E
Preguntas para los talleres de los padres

Spanish Version

1. ¿Desde cuándo tiene su hijo servicios de educación especial?
2. ¿Sabe a qué discapacidad se acoge su hijo para recibir servicios de educación especial?
3. ¿Asiste normalmente a las reuniones del IEP?
4. ¿Siente que las valoraciones y evaluaciones se le explican de una manera que usted entiende?
5. ¿Siente que entiende la información que se le proporciona durante una reunión del IEP?
6. ¿Qué puede hacer tu equipo del IEP para que te sientas más conectado e involucrado durante una reunión del IEP?
7. ¿Qué cree que es lo más importante que puede hacer para ayudar al progreso académico de su hijo en base a los objetivos de su IEP?
8. ¿Qué factores cree que influyen en su participación en las reuniones del IEP de su hijo?
9. En su opinión, ¿qué papel cree que tiene la asistencia a talleres para aumentar los conocimientos sobre educación especial en el aumento de su participación en el proceso del IEP en la escuela de su hijo?
10. ¿Qué habilidades cree que podrá aplicar de este taller en las reuniones del IEP en el futuro?
11. ¿De qué manera le ayudó este taller a aumentar su conocimiento sobre sus derechos/recursos?

Appendix E
Workshop Handouts



Artwork by Ernesto Yerena Montejano

Rompiendo Barreras: taller para familias con hijos en educación especial

Indice de Contenidos

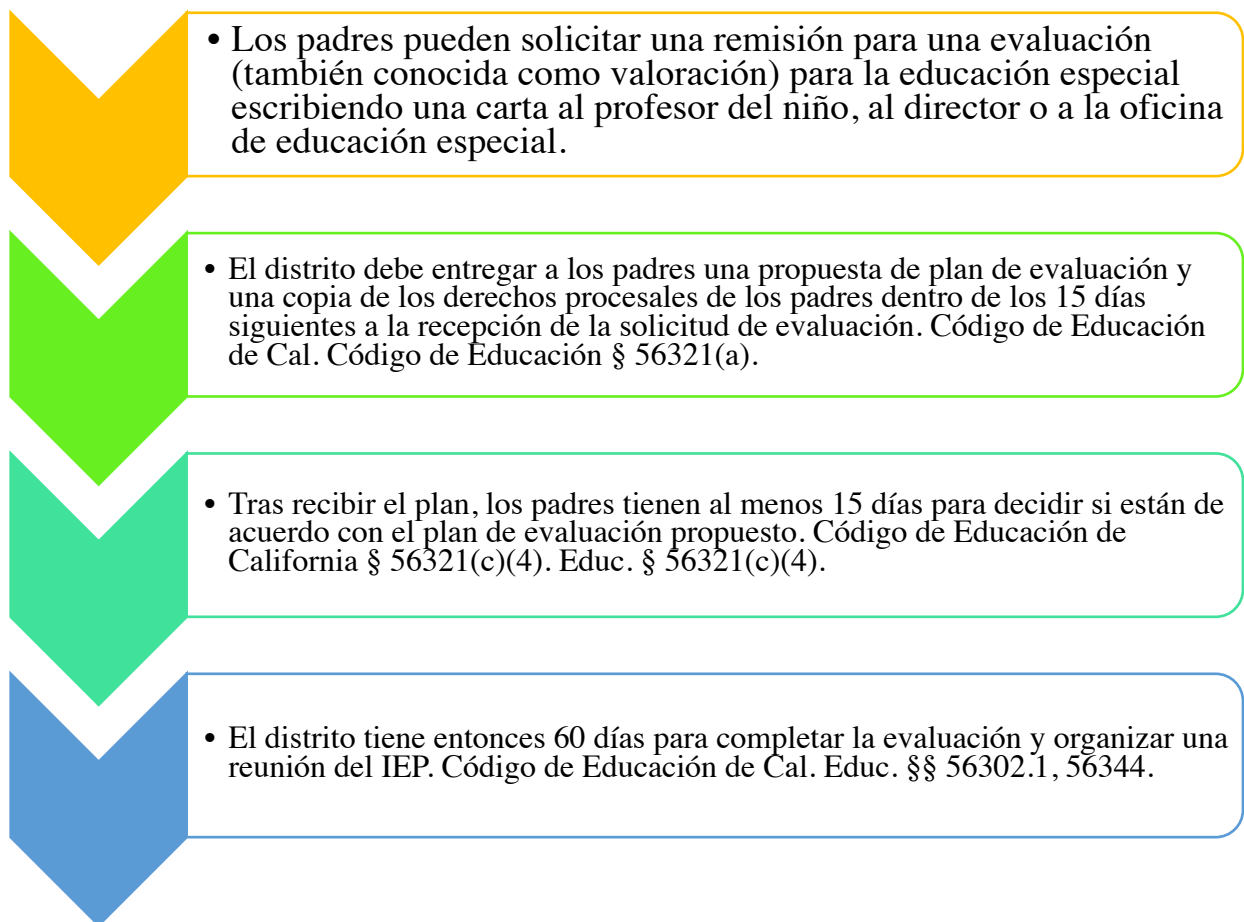
Taller 1: Que es Un Plan Individualizado de Educación	P 1
Taller 2: Proceso y Recursos del IEP	P 4
Taller 3: Consejos Para Mejorar la Comunicación con la Escuela de sus hijos.....	P7
Taller 4: Participación de los padres	P 9
Taller 5 : Derechos de los padre.....	P 12
Taller 6 : Recursos comunitarios.....	P 15
Taller 7: Tema dirigido por las Familias	P 16
Taller 8: Reflexión sobre el taller.....	P 17

Taller 1: Que es un Plan Individualizado de Educación (IEP)

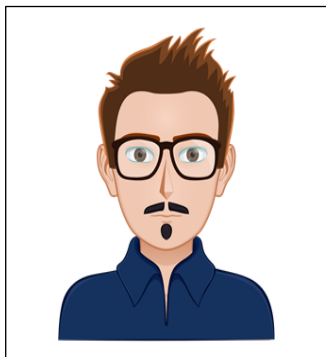
Que es un IEP?

- ◆ Un IEP es un plan diseñado específicamente para atender las necesidades de aprendizaje de su hijo.
- ◆ El IEP está diseñado para identificar los objetivos de aprendizaje de su hijo para el próximo año
- ◆ El IEP identifica las adaptaciones y el apoyo que todos deben seguir para que su hijo aprenda

Cronologia de el IEP



Miembros del Equipo del IEP



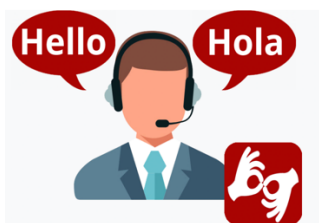
Los educadores especiales en el equipo del IEP



Los educadores de Educación general



Un representante del sistema escolar



Alguien que interprete los resultados de la



Otras personas con conocimientos o experiencia especial sobre



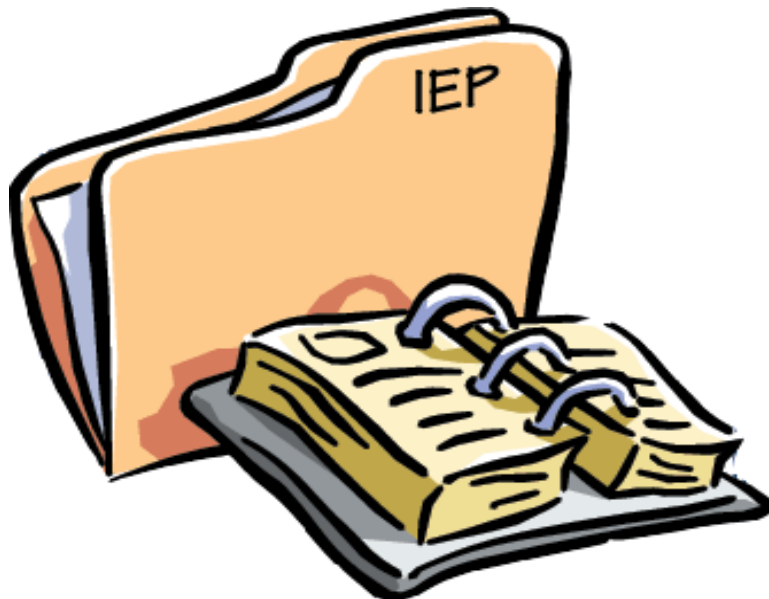
Alumno, cuando es apropiado



Los padres/tutores en el equipo del IEP

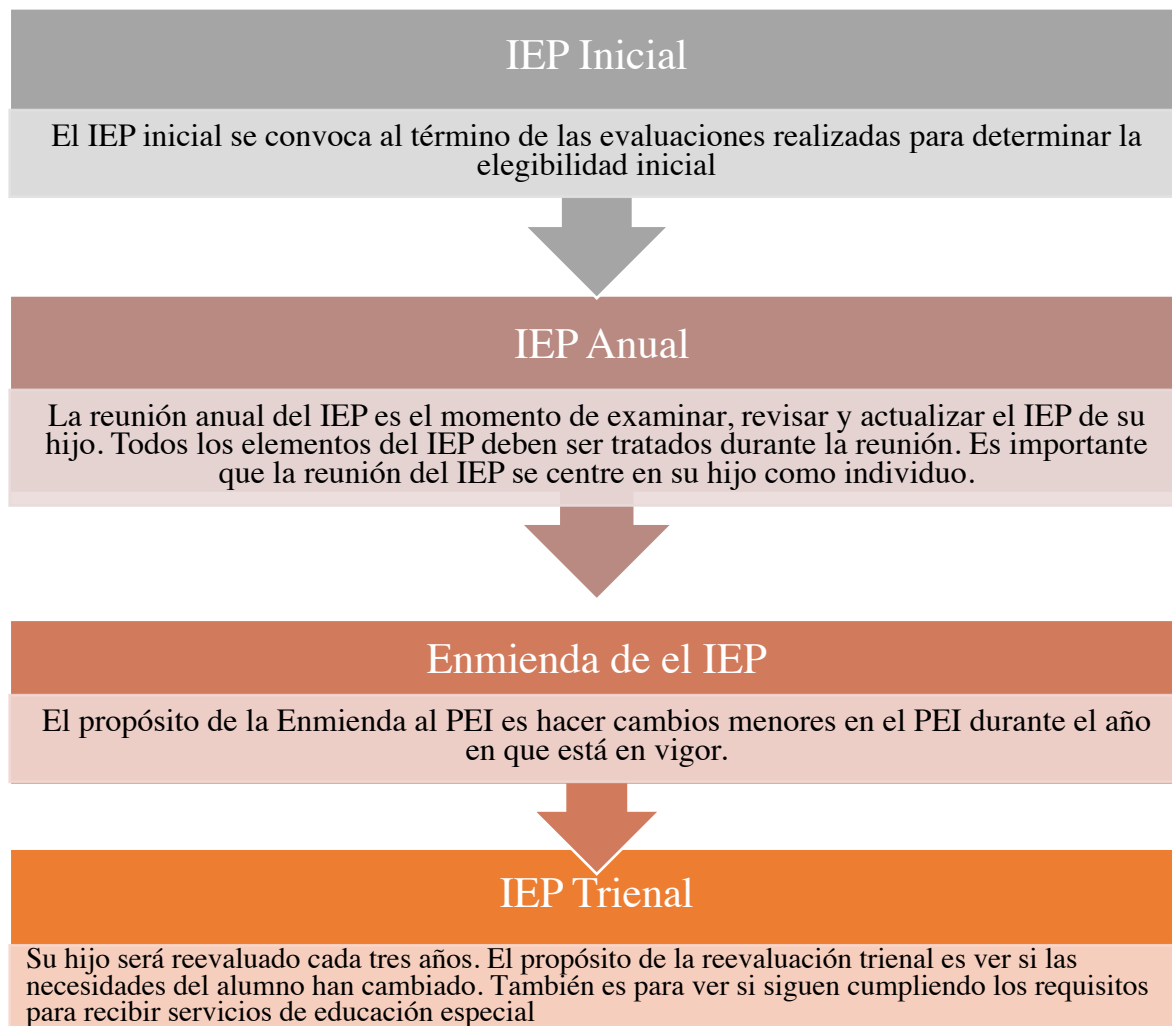
El Contenido de un IEP

- ◆ Información / Elegibilidad
- ◆ Nivel actual de rendimiento académico y funcional
- ◆ Factores especiales
- ◆ Hoja de reclasificación del idioma inglés
- ◆ Evaluaciones estatales
- ◆ Metas y objetivos anuales
- ◆ Oferta de Educación Pública Apropriada y Gratuita
- ◆ Notas
- ◆ Firma y consentimiento de los padres



Taller 2: Proceso y recursos del IEP

Tipos de IEP



Categorías de elegibilidad

discapacidades intelectuales;

deficiencias auditivas (incluida la sordera)

deficiencias del habla o del lenguaje

deficiencias visuales (incluida la ceguera)

trastornos emocionales

discapacidades ortopédicas

autismo

lesión cerebral traumática

otras deficiencias de salud

discapacidades específicas de aprendizaje

retraso en el desarrollo.

Diferentes Tipos de Apoyos

Educación especial

Instrucciones de adaptación

Se pueden hacer modificaciones a:

- ◆ lo que se le enseña a un niño, y/o
- ◆ la forma en que el niño trabaja en la escuela.

Servicios relacionados

- ◆ servicios de logopedia y audiología
- ◆ servicios de interpretación
- ◆ servicios psicológicos
- ◆ fisioterapia y terapia ocupacional
- ◆ recreación, incluida la recreación terapéutica
- ◆ identificación y evaluación temprana de discapacidades en niños
- ◆ servicios de asesoramiento, incluido el asesoramiento en materia de rehabilitación
- ◆ servicios de orientación y movilidad
- ◆ servicios médicos con fines de diagnóstico o evaluación
- ◆ servicios de salud escolar y servicios de enfermería escolar
- ◆ servicios de trabajo social en las escuelas

Ayudas y servicios complementarios

- ◆ equipos adaptados
- ◆ tecnología de asistencia
- ◆ formación para el personal, los estudiantes y/o los padres
- ◆ tutores entre pares
- ◆ un ayudante individual
- ◆ materiales adaptados, como libros grabados, letra grande o notas resaltadas; y
- ◆ colaboración/consulta entre el personal, los padres y/o otros profesionales.

Acomodación en evaluaciones y exámenes de gran envergadura



Taller 3: Consejos Para Mejorar la Comunicación con la Escuela de su hijo

- ◆ Es una buena idea mantener un cuaderno designado con la información de su hijo, los contactos de la escuela y las notas de las reuniones del IEP
- ◆ Crea un correo electrónico. Anote cuál es su correo electrónico y su contraseña. Asegúrate de ofrecer tu dirección de correo electrónico al personal de la escuela.
- ◆ Asegúrate de que el buzón de voz de tu teléfono está configurado y puedes recibir mensajes de voz.
- ◆ Siempre que tengas una conversación con el personal de la escuela. Asegúrate de anotar siempre quién es la persona, su función y cuándo tuvo lugar la conversación.
- ◆ Cuando dejes un mensaje de voz:
 - Asegúrate de informar sobre el motivo de tu llamada.
 - Pide una cita en persona si es necesario
 - Cuando pidas que te devuelvan la llamada, asegúrate de informar de tu disponibilidad.
- ◆ Antes de asistir a una reunión en la escuela, debes hacer las siguientes preguntas:
 - Si hay algún documento específico que deba llevar
 - Si va a recibir documentos antes de la reunión, pregunte cuándo debe esperarlos
 - Anote la fecha de la reunión y programe una alarma en su teléfono para que no se le olvide. Si no, anótelos en un calendario que esté a su disposición

Registro de Comunicaciones

Es una Buena práctica llevar un registro de todas las Comunicaciones que tenga con la escuela de hijo y los motivos de la comunicación. Más Adelante, si tiene alguna duda puede consultar esta información y discutir sus preocupaciones.

Fecha	Personal Escolar Contactado	Motivo

Taller 4: Participación de los padres

Toma de notas del IEP

Es una buena práctica tomar nota de quiénes asisten, el motivo del IEP, las recomendaciones, los puntos fuertes y las áreas de necesidad

Fecha del IEP _____

Miembros del equipo que asisten y su papel en el equipo del IEP _____

Motivo del IEP (inicial/anual, trianual, modificación/transición) _____

Puntos fuertes _____

Áreas de necesidad _____

Recomendaciones _____

Objetivos completados _____

Objetivos en curso _____

Seguimiento _____

Próxima reunión del IEP _____

Notas:

Lista de pasos claves del IEP

- ◆ Se puede solicitar una reunión del PEI en cualquier momento
- ◆ La reunión del IEP debe programarse en un momento acordado
- ◆ Puede solicitar los resultados y recomendaciones de una evaluación antes de la reunión del IEP
- ◆ Puede solicitar una copia del orden del día de la reunión del IEP y pedir que se añadan sus puntos
- ◆ Revisar los expedientes de su hijo y asegurarse de que conoce todos los servicios que se prestan.
- ◆ Haga una lista de preguntas que le gustaría que se respondieran
- ◆ Tome notas durante la reunión del IEP
- ◆ Comparta los puntos fuertes y las habilidades de su hijo
- ◆ Mantenga el enfoque en las necesidades de su hijo
- ◆ Colabore en la presentación de las opciones
- ◆ Pida aclaraciones si algo no está claro
- ◆ Obtenga copias de todas las notas de la reunión, del IEP y de las evaluaciones
- ◆ Aclare las mejores maneras de comunicarse con la escuela, proporcione toda la información de contacto actualizada
- ◆ Programe la próxima reunión a una hora que le convenga a usted y al equipo del IEP

CONOZCA LA ESCUELA DE SU HIJO

NOMBRE DEL DISTRITO ESCOLAR _____

NOMBRE DE LA ESCUELA _____

DIRECCIÓN DE LA ESCUELA _____

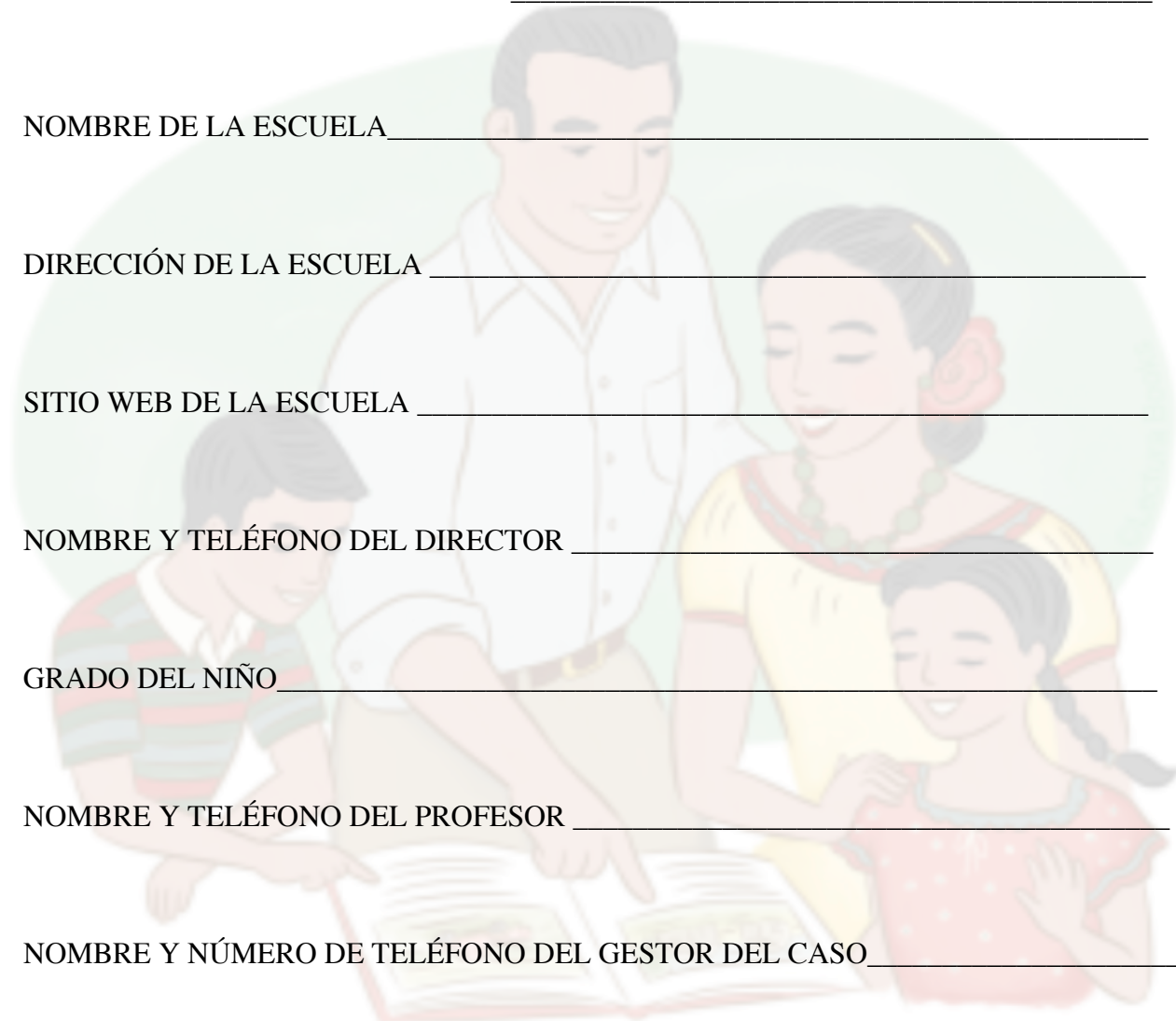
SITIO WEB DE LA ESCUELA _____

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GRADO DEL NIÑO _____

NOMBRE Y TELÉFONO DEL PROFESOR _____

NOMBRE Y NÚMERO DE TELÉFONO DEL GESTOR DEL CASO _____



Taller 5 : Derechos de los padre

Guía de Recursos para Padres - Los Derechos de los Padres* (Salvoconductos de Procedimiento)

Como padre usted tiene derecho a:

- Pedir una evaluación para determinar si su niño es elegible para Educación Especial
- Que se le de un plan de evaluación (para su revisión y consentimiento) dentro de 15 días de su petición para evaluación
- Que no se evalúe a su estudiante si no está de acuerdo con el plan de evaluación
- Ser notificado por escrito si el distrito determina que una evaluación no es garantizada
- Que su niño sea evaluado en todas las áreas donde se sospeche discapacidad
- Recibir una notificación de reunión para IEP con fecha, hora y lugar de mutuo acuerdo y de manera anticipada (generalmente dentro de 60 días después de que firmó el plan de evaluación)
- Pedir un intérprete si usted necesita uno para entender lo que se está diciendo en la reunión
- Traer personas de su elección a la reunión de IEP (notifique al distrito por escrito anticipadamente)
- Grabar la reunión de IEP (notificar al distrito por escrito anticipadamente)
- Ser notificado por escrito si a su estudiante se le encuentra inelegible para servicios de Educación Especial
- Que se le de un reporte por escrito que resuma los resultados de las evaluaciones
- Participar en la reunión de IEP para determinar elegibilidad y servicios apropiados para su niño
- Compartir información relevante acerca de su niño con el equipo de IEP
- Haber implementado los servicios y apoyos estipulados en el IEP dentro de un tiempo razonable
- Pedir más reuniones del equipo de IEP cuando usted crea sean necesarias (el distrito tiene 30 días para acomodar estas peticiones)
- Pedir que el distrito escolar trabaje hacia resolver desacuerdos, si estos surgen
- Esperar que los documentos del estudiante generados en la reunión de IEP se mantendrán confidenciales y serán compartidos con otras agencias solamente si es permitido por la ley o con su consentimiento
- Los padres pueden firmar su asistencia a la reunión de IEP, pero pueden retener el derecho a revisar mas adelante el IEP antes de firmar/dar por aceptado el ofrecimiento de FAPE por el distrito

San Mateo County SELPA – Resource Parent Council – 10/12

*Para obtener información completa de Los Derechos de los Padres refiérase a "Aviso de Garantías Procesales" disponible en la página web de la Oficina de Educación del Condado de San Mateo u obtenga copias de la oficina de su distrito escolar local.

Servicios de traducción e interpretación

Debe informar a la escuela, antes de la reunión del IEP, de que necesitará proporcionar un intérprete cualificado para la reunión. Recuerde que los distritos escolares tienen la obligación de garantizar que usted tenga la oportunidad de participar de manera significativa durante las reuniones del IEP y que pueda entender adecuadamente lo que se discute en las reuniones del IEP.

- ◆ Documentos que se deben proporcionar en su idioma de preferencia:
- ◆ Consentimiento de los padres para la evaluación
- ◆ Consentimiento de los padres para iniciar los servicios de educación especial
- ◆ Consentimiento de los padres para excusar a un miembro del equipo del IEP de una reunión del IEP
- ◆ Notificación previa por escrito cuando la escuela propone o rechaza iniciar o cambiar la identificación, evaluación o colocación del alumno
- ◆ Notificación de las garantías procesales
- ◆ Evaluaciones

DERECHOS DE LOS PADRES EN VIRTUD DE IDEA

- ◆ El derecho de los padres a recibir una explicación completa de todas las salvaguardias procesales disponibles en virtud de la ley IDEA y los procedimientos del estado para presentar quejas
- ◆ La confidencialidad y el derecho de los padres a inspeccionar y revisar los registros educativos de su hijo
- ◆ El derecho de los padres a participar en las reuniones relacionadas con la identificación, evaluación y colocación de su hijo, y la provisión de FAPE (una educación pública gratuita y apropiada) para su hijo
- ◆ El derecho de los padres a obtener una evaluación educativa independiente (IEE) de su hijo
- ◆ El derecho de los padres a recibir una "notificación previa por escrito" sobre asuntos relacionados con la identificación, evaluación o colocación de su hijo, y la provisión de FAPE a su hijo
- ◆ El derecho de los padres a dar o negar su consentimiento antes de que la escuela pueda tomar ciertas medidas con respecto a su hijo
- ◆ El derecho de los padres a no estar de acuerdo con las decisiones tomadas por el sistema escolar sobre estas cuestiones
- ◆ El derecho de los padres y de las escuelas a utilizar los mecanismos de IDEA para resolver conflictos, incluido el derecho a apelar la determinación

Reference: Parent Center Hub. *Rights to Receive a Complete Explanation of IDEA's Procedural Safeguards*. Retrieved from <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/parental-rights/>

Taller 6 : Recursos comunitarios

Children's Council San Francisco

445 Church Street, San Francisco, CA 94114 Front Desk : (415)276-2900
Resource and Referral Line: (415)3432-3300 <http://www.childrenscouncil.org>

Community Alliance for Special Education

1550 Bryant Street, Suite 735, San Francisco, CA 94103 (p): (415)431-2285
<http://www.caseadvocacy.org>

Instituto Familiar de la Raza

2919 Mission Street., San Francisco, CA 94110 (p): (415)229-0500
<http://ifrsf.org/about-us/>

Parents Helping Parents

1400 Parkmoor Ave., Ste 100, San Jose, CA (p) (408)727-5775
<http://www.php.com>

Support for Families of Children with Disabilities

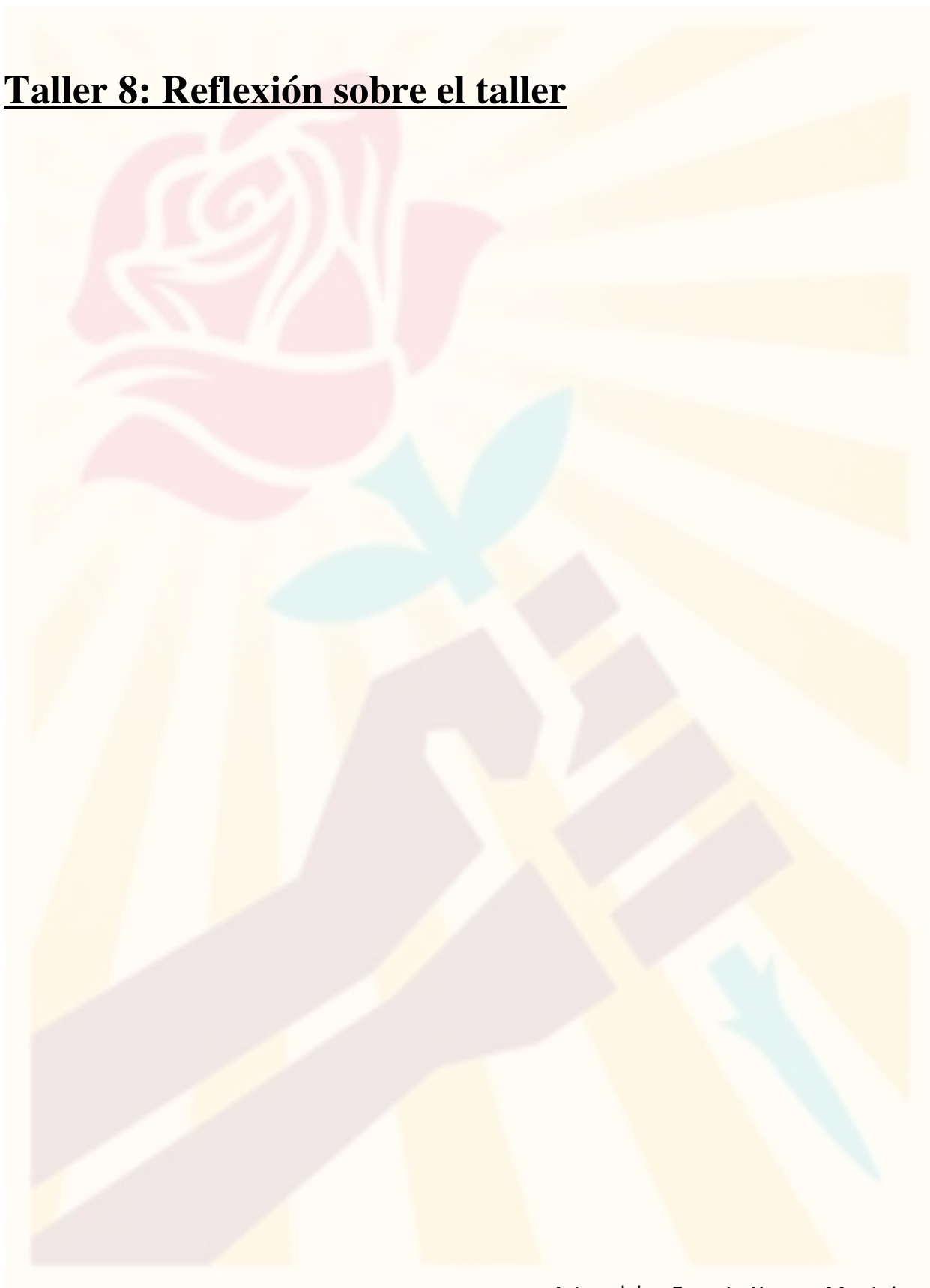
1663 Mission St., 7th floor, San Francisco, CA 94103 P: (415)920-5040
<http://www.supportforfamilies.org>

Taller 7: Tema dirigido por las Familias



Artwork by : Favianna Rodriguez

Taller 8: Reflexión sobre el taller



Artwork by; Ernesto Yerena Montejano