

PARENTAL UNDERSTANDING AND SATISFACTION OF SPECIAL
EDUCATION SERVICES IN THE STATE OF TEXAS

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Parental participation in educational issues is relevant in assisting parents in understanding and becoming satisfied with their child's educational experience. Parental involvement is not only an ethical issue for teachers, but mandates have been established for special educators through various public laws. When involving parents in their children's education, it is relevant to consider various factors associated with students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. Parental satisfaction plays an important role in many cultures in obtaining parental involvement in decision-making meetings. If parents experience negative interactions, parental participation can be diminished. In other cultures, the satisfaction level raises parental trust in allowing school staff to make the appropriate choices for their children. Family values and beliefs among the various cultures should be a consideration when encouraging parents to participate in their child's educational process. Several barriers exist when involving different cultural groups; therefore, it is essential for educators to become aware of these barriers and learn strategies to overcome them. This study addresses parental understanding and satisfaction among ethnic group and throughout various disability groups by evaluating parental responses from a statewide survey and three focus groups.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Parental participation in educational issues is relevant in assisting parents in understanding and becoming satisfied with their child's educational experience. Parental involvement is not only an ethical issue for teachers; there are mandates for special educators through IDEA as well as for general educators through No Child Left Behind (Thompson, 2003b). When involving parents in the educational experience of their child, it is important to consider various factors associated with students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. Parental satisfaction plays an important role in many cultures in obtaining parental involvement in decision-making meetings. In other cultures, the satisfaction level raises parental trust in school staff to make the appropriate choices for their children. Family values and beliefs among the various cultures should be considered when encouraging parents to participate in their child's educational process. Several barriers exist when involving different cultural groups; therefore, it is essential for educators to become aware of these barriers and learn strategies to overcome them.

Research indicates that remarkable academic achievement occurs when parents or family members become involved in their child's educational experiences (Kea, 2002; Pena, 2000; Quezada, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2003, Thompson, 2003b). The importance of parental participation in educational issues is relevant regardless of ethnicity or educational ability. Parents who become involved in the educational process will have a better understanding of how to assist their own children in becoming successful in school.

Rationale of Original Study

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) monitored the state of Texas during the Spring of 2002 to determine specific areas of noncompliance, highlighted strengths, and suggested areas of improvement which were outlined and given to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) in 2003. The State Parent Training Committee (PTC), an improvement planning committee, determined what steps should be taken by the state to achieve the desired results to improve the noncompliant area of parental involvement. One solution suggested in the Parent Involvement Plan was to develop and distribute a statewide parent survey. The Education Service Center (ESC) Parent Network which was led by Region IX in Wichita Falls, Texas, had also determined a need to gather information from parents and spearheaded the survey development process. A survey approach was then selected to solicit parents' opinions as the most appropriate means in eliciting data from parents.

Statement of the Problem

Many minority parents resist becoming involved in their children's education for numerous reasons. If we want parents to become active participants in the educational decision-making process, it is critical that they understand the school expectations and feel comfortable with the education of their children. Parental participation and parental understanding are often interdependent. Often, Caucasian teachers do not understand why parents of diverse cultures are not involved in the education of their children and attribute lack of participation to parental apathy (Delpit, 1995; Harry, 1992). Such assumptions cause teachers to feel it is a waste of time to encourage parents with low

participation when in reality, educators should work arduously to make accommodations to involve parents (Harry, 1992; Thorp, 1997). Parents are often inhibited from participating because of difficult work schedules or childcare issues. It is essential that teachers become aware of cultural diversity and the effects it has on parental participation and understanding.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is threefold. The first intent is to examine the differences among three ethnicities (i.e., African American, Caucasian, and Hispanics) on perceptions regarding special education services from parent responses on a statewide survey. A second intent is to examine differences in parental understanding and satisfaction within the various disability categories (i.e., auditory impairments, other health impairments, orthopedic impairments, autism, mental retardation, learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, visual impairments, speech impairments, and traumatic brain injury) among various ethnic groups (i.e., African American, Caucasian, and Hispanics). A third intent is to determine differences from a qualitative perspective of parental perceptions and general satisfaction regarding special education from three different ethnic categories (i.e., African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic).

Research Questions

Three research questions guided this study.

Research Question 1

What differences exist among three ethnic groups (i.e., African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic) on perceptions regarding special education services in the area of understanding and satisfaction based on the results from a state-wide parent survey?

Research Question 2

What differences exist among three ethnic groups (i.e., African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic) on parental understanding and satisfaction within selected disability categories (i.e., other health impairments (OHI), autism (AU), mental retardation (MR), learning disabilities (LD), emotional disturbances (ED), and speech impairments (SI)) based on the results from a state-wide parent survey?

Research Question 3

What differences exist among three ethnic groups (i.e., African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic) when parents are given the opportunity to respond while participating in a focus group?

Significance of Study

A study of this nature is significant in determining the differences, if any, among ethnicities in parental understanding of special education procedures and the overall satisfaction of special education services. Conclusions from this study may assist educators in addressing deficit areas in the special education process that may exist while working with various ethnic groups within various disability categories.

Limitations

A potential limitation for the survey used in the quantitative component of the study is that the survey asked for perceptions or opinions and what was reported by the parent may differ from actual fact. The same limitation may be relevant in the qualitative component of the study because the researcher asked for opinions and perceptions as well and parental perception may differ from what actually occurs or what is factual.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The importance of parental participation in educational issues is relevant regardless of ethnicity or educational ability. The purpose of this review is to examine professional literature related to participation and satisfaction of families from various cultures in the special education process as well as in the general education setting. Not only do educational ethics promote parental participation, but special education laws have mandated the participation of parents in the decision-making process of special education. Laws that pertain to general education students, as well as special education students, will be the first topic discussed. Research will be reviewed concerning special education, parental participation, and satisfaction from a general education perspective. Literature will be examined on topics related to ethnic perspectives on educational issues among African American parents, Hispanic parents, as well as parents in other minority categories. Barriers to parental participation and successful strategies used to increase parental participation and to improve communication between parents and professionals will also be examined. Qualitative research procedures will be briefly discussed. The review of literature dates from 1991 through 2004 and was obtained online via EBSCOhost. Various books relating to special education and culture were also used as references.

Special Education Laws Concerning Parental Participation

Education reform has been an ongoing process for many decades in an effort to effect change in the public school system so that all students can achieve at expected levels (Thompson, 2003b). For many years, the field of special education has made efforts to

appropriately deal with demographic changes occurring among the families and children with disabilities (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1999). In recent years, professionals involved in special education have begun to see a need for nondiscriminatory assessment in order to minimize the issue of overrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education as well as involving these parents in their child's educational decision-making process. Because of the need to encourage parents to participate, parent involvement in the education of children with disabilities became a legal mandate with the passage of various laws (e.g., P.L. 94-142 and subsequent mandates) (Al-Hassan & Gardner, 2002; Seligman, 1985). The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (Public Law 94-142) was the first of special education legislation that required teachers to develop, with the parents, individualized education plans for students with disabilities (Seligman, 1985). The idea of parents being involved in the decision-making process for students with disabilities was further strengthened by P.L. 101-476 and in the subsequent reauthorizations of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Al-Hassan & Gardner, 2002). The 1997 reauthorization of the IDEA required, in stronger language, that parents be included in the Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings and in groups making eligibility and placement decisions about their child with a disability (Discover IDEA, 2000). Parents have a right to consent to periodic re-evaluations of their child's program, in addition to the initial evaluation. Further, they have the right to regular progress reports that are commonly made for other children (Discover IDEA, 2000).

An analysis of the federal laws (e.g, P.L. 94-142; P.L. 101-476, P.L. 105-17) reveals that it is mandated that each child who has qualified for special education services must have an individual education plan (IEP; Lytle & Bordin, 2001). Generally, an IEP team

writes the plan based on the student's educational needs. This team should consist of parents, an administrator, a general education teacher, and any special education staff that participated in the child's testing. Because of the mandate by the IDEA, teachers must work arduously to establish relationships with families so that families participate to the fullest extent possible in their child's educational process including the IEP process (Campbell-Whatley & Gardner, 2002).

Parental Participation/Student Achievement

After reviewing 35 years of research on school effectiveness, Marzano (2003) delineated several school-level factors that effect student achievement. These included (a) curriculum needs (e.g., opportunity to learn, appropriate content, focus on central learning skills, basic skill acquisition), (b) goals and feedback (e.g., high expectations, monitoring standards), (c) parent and community involvement (e.g., parental involvement, home-school partnership), (d) safe environments (e.g., school climate, positive reinforcement, learning environment, safe and orderly atmosphere), and (e) collegiality and professionalism (e.g., strong leadership, cooperation among staff members). Research has consistently indicated that there is a strong positive correlation between meaningful parental and family involvement in a child's educational experiences and positive student outcomes (Kea, 2002; Pena, 2000; Thompson, 2003b). Considerable evidence indicates that parental involvement leads to improved student achievement, and better school attendance, reduced dropout rates (Campbell-Whatley & Gardner, 2002; Inger, 1993; Obiakor, et al., 2002) more positive attitudes and behaviors, increased homework completion, and higher grades (Campbell-Whatley & Gardner, 2002; Thompson, 2003b), and a greater likelihood of attending college (Thompson, 2003b).

The reliance on parental involvement for improved student outcomes and more appropriate behaviors is the same regardless of socioeconomic status, race, or culture (Campbell-Whatley & Gardner, 2002; Inger, 1993).

Parental Satisfaction and Parental Participation

Parental satisfaction plays an important role in many cultures in obtaining parental involvement in decision-making, while in other cultures the satisfaction level raises parental trust in school staff to make the appropriate choices for their children. Many minority parents have the propensity to place trust in the school and do not expect to become influential decision-makers in the educational experiences of their children (Harry, 1992; Lee & Manning, 2001). This trust level that diminishes parental participation in the Hispanic or Asian American populations and may have the opposite effect on other cultures such as African Americans. It is essential in the African American community to build trust and respect in order to promote parental participation (Colbert, 1991).

In a study conducted by Lynch and Stein (1987) found that among Puerto Rican parents a traditional trust with school staff members translated into a general satisfaction with the school. The study findings were based on single interviews with the use of questionnaires to guide the interviews. The findings indicated that while Mexican American parents were more satisfied than African American and Caucasian parents in regards to decisions made about their child's educational issues, the participation level was lower than the African American and Caucasian parents.

Colbert (1991) reported a study to determine African American parental perceptions regarding their satisfaction level with their child's current educational progress. A

component of the study required parents to indicate whether they were more of an assertive parent or nonassertive parent on educational issues. Of those parents who were identified as assertive, 60% reported dissatisfaction with the educational progress of their child. Specific criteria for the dissatisfied judgments were related to schools not meeting their individual needs and not understanding their families. Eighty percent of the nonassertive parents reported being satisfied with their child's current school progress, even though the parents were unable to clearly indicate the criteria used for the decision-making process.

Thompson (2003b) examined variables that predict how African American parents and guardians rated their children's teachers and the public school system. The researcher accrued both quantitative and qualitative data. The results indicated that while several variables (e.g., benefits of high school course work, benefits of high school homework, parents' and guardians' self-ratings, children's attitude about reading, grade retention-course failure level) were significant in predicting how parents rated teachers and public school system. The strongest predictor involved the parents' and guardians' satisfaction with their children's elementary school teachers. Results were disaggregated among elementary school teachers, middle school teachers, and high school teachers. Regarding the satisfaction level of elementary school teachers, 69% of the African American parents and guardians gave their child's elementary school teachers an excellent or good rating, while only 14% gave them a low rating of poor or needs improvement. Sixty-six percent of the parents and guardians who had children in middle school while the study was being conducted or who previously had children in middle school rated their children's teacher excellent or good. Eleven percent of the parents and

guardians gave their children's middle school teachers a low rating. When parents and guardians rated their child's high school teachers, only 49% rated them as being excellent or good while 20% parents and guardians gave the high school teachers low ratings.

Thompson (2003b) evaluated which predictors influenced the satisfaction level of the parental ratings of school. The strongest predictor was the rating that parents and guardians gave to their children's elementary teachers. The second strongest predictor was the parental belief about the benefits their children received from their high school homework. Two negative predictors affected the satisfaction level which included a parents' or guardians' beliefs about whether teachers had treated their children fairly and whether parents and guardians had assisted their children academically by serving as classroom volunteers.

The overall results indicated that some variables (e.g., child's elementary teacher, parental perceptions regarding homework) have a stronger impact on African American parents and guardians in terms of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their children's teachers and towards the public school system. The majority of parents and guardians gave high ratings to their children's teachers and to the public school system. The ratings for the elementary, junior high, and high school teachers had descending percentages of satisfaction with the elementary teachers receiving the highest satisfaction level and the high school receiving the lowest satisfaction level.

Culture and Parental Participation

It is well known among educators that there is immense importance of involving parents in their child's education because of the positive effects it has on the child's educational growth (Kea, 2002; Pena, 2000; Thompson, 2003b). Until recently,

Caucasian educators have predominantly worked with middle- to upper-class European Americans and interacted less with children from varying races, cultures, and ethnic groups (Kea, 2002). The limited involvement teachers have had with families from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds may be due to limited knowledge of the unique backgrounds and needs of these families. Teachers who are successful in increasing parental participation are familiar with the culture in which the family is involved (Campbell-Whatley & Gardner, 2002). By understanding the culture, teachers will have a better understanding of the behavior of the members of that culture (Kea, 2002). The culture affects how parents become involved as well as whether the teachers and school validate the language and culture of the family (Pena, 2000).

Hispanic Culture and Parental Participation

Family structure and support for extended families are important elements within the Hispanic culture in the United States (Inger, 1993; Perez & Pinzon, 1997). Typically, Latinos tend to think in terms of “us/our” rather than on “I” terms; therefore, family members often sacrifice their own personal goals to enhance the welfare of their family (Perez & Pinson, 1997). Generally, when Hispanic children are at home, they are nurtured with great care by a large number of relatives (Inger, 1993). Although the Hispanic culture provides an intensely nurturing environment at home, family members are often reluctant to become involved in their children’s education. In a study conducted by Pena (2000), Mexican American parents indicated that they believe they are being helpful by maintaining a respectful distance from the education system. Some cultures, such as those of Hispanic decent, see involvement as interfering with their child’s

education and historically have different relationships with school and attitudes about family involvement in schools (Al-Hassan & Gardner, 2002; Thorp, 1997).

Because of the educational difficulties faced by Hispanics for various reasons, involvement of Hispanic parents has never been more important than today. It is estimated that 22.5% of Hispanic people live in poverty (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Mills, 2004) with 40% of Hispanic children living in poverty (Inger, 1993). The Hispanic population is the most undereducated segment of the United States population (Inger, 1993). Typically, when working class and minority parents are included in school activities, it tends to be in traditional roles such as fund raising or chaperones rather than in decision-making roles (Pena, 2000). To actively and meaningfully involve Hispanic parents in their child's education, many factors should be considered (e.g., language barriers, parent cliques, parental level of education, attitudes of school staff, cultural influences, family issues).

According to Pena (2000), who reported on a year-long study in Texas with Mexican American parents, many factors were examined that contribute to parental involvement, or the lack thereof. Seventy-five letters were sent to parents to acquire parental involvement in the study. Twenty-eight interviews and nineteen observations of parent-teacher interactions were used in order to gather data to determine what influences parental involvement in the Mexican American community. The study found that parent involvement was influenced by many factors including language, parent cliques, a parent's level of education, attitudes of school staff, cultural influences, and family issues.

Further, language was found to be particularly influential in determining the activities in which parents chose to participate. The influence of language difference was especially obvious at parent meetings where English seemed to be the preferred language.

Basically, parents thought their attendance was unnecessary when the meetings were conducted in English, because they could not understand what was being discussed.

Another area that influenced parental involvement in the Pena (2000) study were parent cliques. At the beginning of the study, the principal suggested that there were many occurrences that happened between parent cliques that kept parents from participating. There seemed to be one influential group of parents in the school that determined what other parents would participate in school activities or functions. The separation of parents seemed to be between non-Spanish speaking parents and Spanish speaking parents. The non-Spanish speaking parents tended to be on the Parent Teacher Association while the Spanish speaking parents did not participate. The friction between the two groups was amplified because they often disagreed about what money should be spent on, which essentially led to a lack of either group of parents participating.

According to Pena (2000), parent education was another factor that influenced parental involvement. The education level of the parents at the school often affected school participation in subtle ways. The parents with a limited education did not feel comfortable expressing their opinions. The researcher found that the parents who did not have formal education in either the United States or Mexico felt that they could not help their children in school because of their own limited knowledge. The parents did not express this concern to school staff. The staff assumed that the parents could read and understand the written information they disseminated, but many parents had limited

literacy in both English and Spanish. This factor influenced how parents participated at the school.

Attitudes of school staff and parents seemed to have a reciprocal effect on parental participation. Even though teachers were able to speak to the parents in their native language, the attitudes of the teachers influenced parental involvement. The personal feelings of the teachers were not always openly visible to parents; however, parents still felt that they were not always welcome to participate. In fact, one parent reported feeling patronized when she tried to take an active role in making suggestions for her daughter who was labeled with a learning disability. Another factor that made parents feel that teachers didn't see the importance of working together was the low attendance of teachers at meetings. Basically, since teachers felt that involving parents was added work for them, fewer parents were comfortable with becoming involved.

Even though most parents at the elementary school were Mexican American, within-group cultural differences between parents born in the United States and those born in Mexico caused difficulties in obtaining higher parental involvement in the school. Cultural differences, such as traditional family values of parents born in Mexico, caused some mothers to stay at home. They reported that their husbands expected them to stay at home rather than doing any kind of work outside of the house. Some parents faced cultural and social differences that negatively influenced whether or not they became involved. The parents felt they would not be understood or welcomed if they did participate. Other influences that limited parent participation included work schedules, transportation issues, and childcare issues.

Pena (2000) revealed that parents were not only able to identify factors they felt were influential in their involvement, but they were able to offer suggestions for improving parental involvement in the school. The most simplistic suggestion made by parents to increase parental involvement was to make the parents feel welcome. It was suggested that teachers change their attitudes regarding parents and recognize the advantages of parents and teachers working collaboratively. Understanding the barriers that prevent parental involvement regarding parents in the Mexican American community will provide ways to increase and improve parental involvement.

A study by Hughes, Valle-Riestra, & Arguelles (2002) was designed to gain a better understanding of how Latino families with children with disabilities perceive their child's special education program and their involvement in school. The findings indicated ways in which schools can more effectively involve the family in the educational decision-making process. Participants in the study included families of children with disabilities attending a predominantly Latino elementary school in a large, urban school district with a Latino principal and a majority of the teachers of Latino ethnicity. Forty-four families completed a questionnaire with a representative subgroup of sixteen completing individual interviews. A telephone questionnaire was developed and used to identify the families' perceptions and involvement in their child's school and was administered by three trained researchers. The questionnaire consisted of ten items which required families to rate statements regarding satisfaction with the school, involvement in the special education process, and the progress their child has made by using a 4-point Likert-type scale. The families were asked open-ended questions regarding communication between home and school, types of family involvement, and suggestions

for improving communication. All questionnaires were administered in the family's preferred language and were approximately 20 minutes in length. Individual interviews were conducted to determine in greater detail the perceptions and experiences of the families. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions with follow-up probes.

The findings of this study indicated that, overall, families were quite satisfied with their child's special education program and with their involvement in their child's education. The majority of families expressed satisfaction with the overall school-to-home communication. Some families wanted more communication and information about classroom activities and expressed frustration with communication because of their limited English skills.

More specifically, in regards to the perceptions component of the study, families' ratings were favorable in regards to the communication aspect. Ninety-three percent expressed they received regular communication from school and 91% responded that they were satisfied overall with communication. Even though most of parents reported being satisfied with communication, about a quarter of the families indicated being dissatisfied with some aspect of the child's programs. Twenty-five percent of the families conveyed that the process of placing their child in the appropriate program was lengthy and that their child has not made adequate progress over the past year. About 27% of the families felt that their child had not been placed in the most appropriate educational program to best meet his/her needs.

Families were also asked to discuss the various ways in which they had been involved in their child's education. The reported levels and types of involvement varied among families with all of the families identifying themselves as the primary individuals who are

responsible for their child's educational services. Some families indicated they took the leading role in their child's education by communicating, questioning, and being aware of their child's educational issues. The majority of the families expressed their belief that participation meant being involved in every aspect of their children's life including their education, development, and socialization. The most often reported types of school activities in which they participated were attending school meetings, family-teacher conferences, and visiting their child's classroom.

In reference to home-school communication, the families explained that they were contacted often and were kept up-to-date on their child's progress. Families specified that the key to successful communication between home and school was the fact that the school offered translators when needed and that translated materials were also offered. The parents indicated that communication was improved by providing school meetings in both English and Spanish. Suggestions were provided by families on how communication could be improved (e.g., informing parents about the activities that their child is completing in class, how to generalize these skills to activities at home).

While most families were positive regarding the communication of the school, 9% of the families expressed feeling frustrated when dealing with the school. Of this 9%, the majority of the families explained that not speaking English was the main reason for this frustration. These parents felt that even though translators were provided by the school, they were not always available for informal communication. Parents would often bring their own translators to meetings with the teacher to help them understand what was being said. Another difficulty expressed by parents was the work schedule which interfered with opportunities that were provided for parents to communicate with

teachers. Meetings were often held during school hours which is the time that most parents work, making it difficult for families to attend these meetings.

The findings of this study revealed that the majority of parents were satisfied with their child's special education program and with how involved they were with their child's educational experience. Most of the families expressed satisfaction with the amount of regular communication and the overall home-school communication. While there were families that had feelings of frustration, these centered around the fact that the parents were unable to speak English. Parents in this study offered suggestions on how communication might be improved in the future.

African American Culture and Parental Participation

A lack of participation by parents in the African American community regarding educational issues is proving to be of detriment to the education system (Harrison & Arnold, 1995; Thompson, 2003a) which can also affect special education procedures. Educational outcomes for African American students are not always positive and reasons for the poor outcomes are numerous. Significant gaps exist between Caucasian students and African American students in education outcomes. Often strained educational relationships between African American families and the public school system are present which requires building stronger ties between educators and African American parents (Colbert, 1991; Thompson, 2003a). The weak relationships between African American parents and educators may be a contributing factor to the significant gap. Perceptions of African American parents may be a necessary consideration when determining why such prominent educational gaps exist between African American students and Caucasian students.

In a study by Colbert (1991), twenty-three African American parents of children attending a desegregated K-6 public school in a large mid-western metropolitan community volunteered to complete interviews to determine parental self-perceptions regarding their involvement with the public school system. The results indicated four consistent recurring themes: (a) parental ambiguity in their own childhood school experience, (b) parental management of interactions with school personnel, (c) parental concerns regarding efforts to help children cope with readily accessible “street economy”, and (d) parental aspiration for children in adulthood and progress toward those goals.

Findings pertaining to parental ambiguity in their own childhood educational experience indicated that 65% of the parents reported that as children they were not clear about or had no idea of the purpose of school. However, they did understand and experience pressure, fear, and anxiety about potential punishment or shame for misbehavior or nonattendance. Consequently, 45% of the parents that were interviewed communicated a strong sense of anger and frustration toward schools which they then conveyed to their own children.

The second major theme was about interactions between parents and school personnel and perceived teacher and principal perceptions of the parents. All of the parents expressed that they conducted themselves in a manner that they perceived would enhance their children’s education even though most reported a lack of trust that school personnel would be honest and caring to them or their children. Ten of the twenty-three parents interviewed, indicated they experienced situations in which they were so frustrated with school personnel for the negative notes sent home that they wished to react to the negativity by “cussing out” the teacher or principal. However, the parents realized the

damage that this could cause to their child so when they did meet with school personnel they behaved in a manner that was expected by the mainstream culture. Based on a continuum ranging from non-assertion and not working with the schools to being assertive and cooperating, 50% of the parents fell toward the non-assertion end and reported having a feeling of little or no power and influence regarding their child's education. The other 50% of the parents reported feeling frustrated, but expressed alternative, assertive skills they were able to exhibit in order to influence parent and school interactions. These parents that did feel a sense of power and influence in the school setting, reported exhibiting assertive behavior and verbally demonstrating knowledge about their child's education and parental rights which enhanced their child's education.

The third theme involved parental fears that their children would eventually have inner city street economy occupations. The fourth theme involved desired adulthood goals for their children. Most of the parents interviewed reported feeling trapped in one world while attempting to teach life skills to their children for a life in another world. All of the parents imagined their children functioning in the mainstream society with education as the key to reach those goals for success.

Asian Americans

Even though studies are not as numerous for Asian American populations, some data exist to help educators understand and build productive relationships with Asian American families. The term Asian American can cover a range of national, cultural, and religious heritages (Lee & Manning, 2001) with more than twenty-nine distinct subgroups being encompassed (Feng, 1994). Generally, the Asian American population

can be divided into four distinct groups: (a) Pacific Islanders, such as Hawaii, Samoa, or Guam; (b) Southeast Asians, such as Thai, Vietnamese, Cambodia, Laos, Singapore, Malaysia, and Philippine; (c) South Asian, such as Indian and Pakistani; and (d) East Asian, such as Chinese, Japanese, and Korean (Lee & Manning, 2001). While similarities exist, these subgroups have different origins, ecological adaptations, languages, religions, customs, and histories (Feng, 1994; Lee & Manning, 2001).

Even though diversity among Asian American groups make generalizations difficult, there are general cultural characteristics, values, and practices that are typically shared by most Asians, especially East and Southeast Asians (Feng, 1994). Often, Confucian ideals, which include respect for elders, deferred gratification, and discipline are strong influences in the culture. Because of these basic beliefs, many Asian Americans teach their children to value educational achievement, respect authority, feel responsibility for relatives, and to show self-control. When Asian American children fail in school, parents may view this as a lack of will and this problem will be addressed with parental restrictions creating children that are very dependent, conforming, and willing to place family welfare or saving face, over their own individual wishes. The concern of saving face reflects the significance of family cohesiveness, status, and reputation among Asian cultures (Harry, 1992). Because of the emphasis on family cohesiveness, every act by an individual in either a positive or negative manner is a reflection of the family.

Asian Americans have often had stereotypes placed on their children that can be inaccurate (Feng, 1994; Lee & Manning, 2001). This culture has been stereotyped as successful, law-abiding, and high-achieving minorities when in fact, some Asian American children do suffer from learning disabilities, language difficulties, or financial

burdens that may affect the progress of their school work. When dealing with disability, the Eastern interpretation supports the belief that harmony within the individual and between the individual and the universe is directly related to a person's health both physically and mentally (Harry, 1992). Asian American parents may view the disability as a lack of desire (Feng, 1994) rather than an actual medical or biological cause (Harry, 1992). These implications of the Asian Pacific population must be understood and respected in order to effectively work with families in an educational setting.

In many Asian cultures, teachers and administrators often are viewed with a higher status than teachers in the United States (Feng, 1994; Lee & Manning, 2001). Asian parents feel that it is their role to listen and follow the educators' professional judgement which, according to Lea and Manning (2002) causes reluctance in communicating with teachers, because it may be viewed as challenging the teacher's authority. The reluctance felt by Asian parents should not be misconstrued as a sign of lack of interest or irresponsibility toward school affairs, rather teachers need to understand and accept the authority of the teacher that is offered by this culture.

Native Americans

Very few Americans have had the opportunity to acquire the depth of knowledge or understanding about American's history relative to Native Americans (Staurowsky, 1999). An important concept for educators to understand when working with Native American individuals is that the variability of the social organization and in family structure within this population is a result of both traditional differences and the impact of social and political subordination by the dominant culture in the United States (Harry, 1992). There is a strong emphasis on physical and spiritual connectedness, the child as

his/her individual, and membership in a larger social group. These beliefs have a strong implication on the view of disabilities. While the Western emphasis of disability is on medical or biological implications, the Native American culture believes that the disability is a result of the spirit choosing the body and the disabled body is the outward casing of a spirit. If individuals with the Western belief of disability do not respect or attempt to understand the belief system of Native Americans, many issues of concern may arise which could make parent-school interaction uncomfortable or difficult.

Comparing Participation Across Ethnicities

A study conducted over a six-year time period by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory sought to determine the attitudes and practices of minority parents regarding involvement in their children's education (Chavkin & Garza-Lubeck, 1990). The investigation was conducted in six states in the southwestern region of the United States (i.e., Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas). More than 3000 parents and 4000 educators participated in the study. African American and Hispanic parents were lucid regarding their role and responsibility and had a strong positive attitude about their involvement in their children's education. The survey indicated that the attitudes of minority parents were similar to the attitudes of Caucasian parents in the area of their belief that strong parental support and parental participation is important in their children's education. Differences between minorities and Caucasian parents were in three different areas. The first difference was in reference to teachers being the responsible party for getting parents involved in the educational process. Sixty-two percent of minorities agreed that teachers should be the responsible individuals while only 38% of Caucasian parents concurred. The second divergence was

districts that made rules to involve parents in the educational process of their children. Seventy-nine percent of African American parents, 75% of Hispanic parents, and only 49% of Caucasian parents were in agreement. The final area of disparity was related to a statement regarding working parents not having time to become involved in their child's educational experience with 38% of Hispanics, 32% of African American parents, and only 14% of Caucasian parents agreeing with the statement.

Even though the various ethnicities have similarities as well as differences, there are many barriers that could cause parents of culturally and linguistically diverse students not to participate in the educational experience of their children. Barriers must be recognized and addressed in order to increase parental participation in all ethnic groups.

Barriers to Parental Involvement

There are several potential barriers that influence the extent to which parents will participate in their child's education (Obiakor et al., 2002). Unique barriers exist when involving culturally and linguistically diverse parents in their child's educational experience. These barriers can include a lack of teacher understanding of a child's culture, lack of effective communication, mistrust of the educational system, as well as many other potential issues.

Many educators working in poor and urban schools have widely held beliefs that often African American and Hispanic parents do not care about their child's education (Delpit, 1995), because of the lack of parental participation exhibited by the parents (Harry, 1992). In actuality, interviews with parents repeatedly show that families do in fact want to be involved in their children's educational experience (Thorp, 1997). Often, African American and Hispanic parents may be absent from school functions which causes

educators in poor and urban school districts to inappropriately assume that the absent parent does not care about their child's education (Delpit, 1995). Many educators are puzzled about why culturally diverse parents and families resist efforts made by teachers to become involved in their child's educational experience (Kea, 2002).

Perceptions held by teachers of the mainstream society often become a barrier in increasing parental involvement. One common thread that emerges with this barrier is that professionals directly or inadvertently discourage minority parental participation because of the perception that the parent just doesn't care (Harry, 1992; Thorp, 1997). School professionals may fail to involve parents because of the educator's propensity to blame the parents for their inability to be involved on the lack of interest and commitment (Campbell-Whatley & Gardner, 2002). Professional interpretation of parental apathy may be inaccurate because minority parents may mask feelings of mistrust in apathetic attitudes, which may result in withdrawal from participation in their child's educational experience (Harry, 1992).

When working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) populations, it is critical for teachers to possess skills and knowledge in the area of cross-cultural competency (Loe & Miranda, 2002). For many Caucasian teachers, an important first step in developing cross-cultural competencies is becoming aware of their own personal attitudes, biases, and assumptions (Loe & Miranda, 2002; Obiakor et al., 2004). Caucasian educators may be collectively bound and complicit in the arrangements of dominance that have systematically favored the Caucasian racial group over others (Howard, 2004). For Caucasian teachers who have lived their lives in the dominant group of society, they may believe that they have no culture and culture is only a part of

minority population (Harry, Kalyanpur, & Day, 1999). Caucasian teachers that do believe they have no culture may have the least awareness of the ways in which their culture influences their behaviors and interactions (Loe & Miranda, 2002). Harry et al. (1999) explain that when a person in the dominant group feels they have no culture, they often do not feel they have to define, explain, or contrast themselves to anyone because they are a part of the group, which defines rules in society. This type of thinking may be translated into beliefs that various cultural behaviors are inappropriate because they are not accepted by the dominant culture. The minority is typically responsible to understand or to become acculturated to the ways of the majority or Caucasian culture. The forced acculturation makes it even more necessary for Caucasian teachers to become aware of their own culture so that they can begin to understand and learn about other cultures.

After a Caucasian teacher has made effort to become aware of his/her own culture and understands the impact their beliefs have on students of other cultures, it is then important to begin to learn about other cultures through readings, interactions, and involvement (Loe & Miranda, 2002). Without an understanding of educational beliefs of other cultures, it may be difficult for Caucasian teachers to effectively increase parental participation.

Another potential barrier was demonstrated in a study conducted by Colbert (1991). The study involved African American parents who expressed that their children face strained parent-teacher relationships which parents felt was related to a lack of communication. One reason for strained communication between teacher and parent may be because educators do not always understand that families and individuals from diverse cultural groups are diverse themselves (Kea, 2002). Parents who are culturally diverse

may also shy away from communication opportunities because of the intimidating number of professionals at parent/teacher meetings or because of language barriers. Educators must become cognizant of these potential communication barriers when working to increase parental involvement.

A negative experience encountered by a parent or family may be the single most influential factor challenging family participation (Thorp, 1997). Many culturally and linguistically diverse parents have had negative, discriminatory, and blatantly stereotypical experiences with schools (Al-Hassan & Gardner, 2002; Kea, 2002). These experiences cause barriers in parental participation with several families who are culturally diverse. The mistrust that minorities may have with individuals in the European culture starts from a longstanding perspective or possibly from a recent mishap (Kea, 2002). Another possible cause of mistrust among African American parents is from an overrepresentation of minorities in special education (Harry, 1992; Thorp, 1997). The overrepresentation of minorities as with the African American students, has caused parents to mistrust an educator opinions which in turn leads to a lack of participation with the school (Harrison & Arnold, 1995).

Another potential barrier of parental participation for culturally diverse families is communication difficulties (Kea, 2002). In order to promote communication, educators must gain knowledge and understanding of these communication barriers in the process of taking the first step toward bridging the school personnel and parents (Al-Hassan & Gardner, 2002). Parents who have limited English may have many issues with participating in the educational process of their child (Kea, 2002). These parents may not read or understand the reports the teachers send home, even if the language is sent home

in their native language (Al-Hassan & Gardner, 2002). Typical communication procedures used by schools may also prevent parental participation because of the limited contact that may not be in the parents home language (Al-Hassan & Gardner, 2002; Harrison & Arnold, 1995; Hughes et al., 2002). When parents do not understand the request from school personnel to be present in their child's education by attending various functions or meetings, parental participation is at a minimum, difficult to obtain.

Educators should also become more considerate of families when determining when to hold conferences (Harrison & Arnold, 1995). Many educators fail to involve parents and blame their inability to participate on a lack of interest or commitment rather than on a difficult work schedule (Campbell-Whatley & Gardner, 2002). It is important to remember many minority families face issues such as transportation and childcare needs that could prevent them from becoming involved in their child's educational experience (Harrison & Arnold, 1995).

Since the passage of P.L. 94-142 in 1975, parents have been required to be participants in the decision-making process for the education of their children. Even though parental participation has remained a requirement in subsequent reauthorization of the federal law, this can be a barrier instead of a positive attribute. Often, the mandate for parental participation in special education places the parent in the role of consent givers instead of equal participants (Harrison & Arnold, 1995). As Harry (1992) explains, the focus of special education has generally been more about legally complying with the mandate rather than on making a true effort at collaborating with the parents.

With all the potential barriers that exist, teachers must become cognizant not only of the barriers but also of strategies that exist that may assist teachers in overcoming

barriers. Barriers can be very different for CLD students in special education than with special education students that are a part of the mainstream culture.

Strategies to Promote Parental Participation

Parents of special education students should have a clear understanding of the special education process to promote satisfaction and participation. In order to promote participation among parents, it may be beneficial to devise innovative measures to support parents that may have difficulty coming to school because of their primary concern in life to maintain survival for their families (Darch, Mia, & Shippen, 2004).

When involving parents in the participation of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team meetings, Dabokowski (2004) suggests that team culture dictates the ease or difficulty of the meeting by accepting the parents as team members. According to the author, there are various things that affect parental participation, including the (a) environment in which the meeting is held, (b) respect given to the parents, (c) language used by the team, as well as (d) involvement of the parent throughout the meeting. There are many considerations to increase parental participation by all parents of special education students, however there may be additional considerations when dealing with culturally and linguistically diverse parents. Problems that confront CLD learners are often multidimensional which requires the methods for problem-solving to become multidimensional (Obiakor et al., 2004).

By developing an awareness of your own culture as well as the culture of other individuals, a teacher may learn to recognize the taken-for-granted values and beliefs that you hold and that make you think and act the way you do and then to eventually use this understanding about yourself to understand other individuals from various cultures

(Harry et al., 1999; Loe & Miranda, 2002). Several authors suggest that if you find yourself with this taken-for-granted type of belief system, it would be beneficial to:

1. Develop a self-awareness in which you question yourself about your own value system in life and where the values were derived or potential hidden biases (Harry et al., 1999; Howard, 2004; Loe & Miranda, 2002, Obiakor et al., 2004).
2. Familiarize themselves with values, traditions, and customs of various cultures by studying and reading about the culture, working with individuals from another culture, visiting another society or community or learning the language of another culture to assist in contrasting the difference in your own culture and the minority culture (Feng, 1994; Harry et al., 1999; Howard, 2004; Lee & Manning, 2001; Loe & Miranda, 2002).
3. Develop cultural sensitivity by respecting one's self and others as cultural beings, appreciating one's cultural uniqueness as well as cultural diversity, and keeping one's heart open to similarities and differences among people from different cultural groups (Loe & Miranda, 2002; Obiakor et al., 2004).
4. Develop effective cross-cultural communication by respecting individuals from other cultures, making continued and sincere attempts to understand others' points of view, being open to new learning, being flexible, having a sense of humor, tolerating ambiguity, and approaching others with a desire to learn. (Lee & Manning, 2001; Loe & Miranda, 2002).

By taking the suggested steps in understanding your own culture and determining why certain values are held, teachers can begin to understand and accept other cultures.

Another potential strategy in promoting parental involvement in culturally diverse families is through teaching students in teacher preparation programs the various aspects of culture and parental participation. Formal opportunities to help future teachers increase their knowledge and skills about CLD families are strongly suggested through current licensure recommendations and teacher training programs (Thorp, 1997). In order for educators to be effective in dealing with parents from minority cultures, multicultural education must be taught at the college and university level to embed a respect for the cultural diversity in future educators (Harrison & Arnold, 1995). As Obiakor et al. (2002) explains, teacher preparation programs are a catalyst for making changes in parent/teacher relationships. University programs are responsible for ensuring that teachers gain the knowledge, competencies, training and attitudinal challenges necessary for fostering positive parent/teacher relationships (Obiakor et al., 2002). Future educators should be educated in historical and contemporary contributions of different cultural groups, lifestyles, value systems, interpersonal communication patterns, learning styles, and parental attitudes about education and disabilities (Harrison & Arnold, 1995). Teacher preparation programs must provide future teachers with the skills necessary to initiate empowerment for culturally diverse parents so parents will be involved and influential in their child's educational experience (Obiakor et al., 2002). Through teacher preparation programs, teacher must be taught an appreciation for the contributions parents can make as members of the educational team (Knight & Wadsworth, 1999).

Another important strategy in involving parents in the educational process is through effective communication. Communication between families and school personnel should

be responsive to the cultural values and beliefs of families (CEC, 2002). Teachers should have knowledge concerning the fact that many Asian cultures believe that is challenging the authority of the teacher to participate or communicate regarding school affairs and this may be the reason for a lack of participation rather than a disinterest in the child's education (Lee & Manning, 2001). Educators should employ special strategies for language minority parents and immigrant parents (Kea, 2002). Parents may be encouraged to maintain their native language at home which could possibly set the tone for better communication because the parents may feel the teachers are genuinely interested in their culture (Feng, 1994). Educators may also want to learn a few words of the cultures language to show interest. It is important to send documents regarding school issues home in both English and the parent's native language (Quezada et al., 2003). When dealing with African American families and parents, involvement may be increased if school staff adjust their approaches to the family's beliefs regarding disability, health, and healing (CEC, 2002). It is also important to value the family's sense of propriety and eliminate or reduce any language barriers that may exist.

Conclusion

There are several factors that should be considered when working with culturally and linguistically diverse families and students in special education. The legal mandates should be considered and evaluated in order to understand to what extent parents should be included in the decision-making process of special education. The effects that parental participation has on student achievement is an important consideration when encouraging parents to become involved in their child's education. Various cultures and the differences that exist among the cultures in regard to family values and the role education

plays in the culture are critical in building relationships with families and parents. There are many barriers that prevent parents and families from participating in a meaningful manner in the educational process of their children. Various strategies have been suggested as a means of promoting parental satisfaction and parental participation.

Qualitative Research

Although the experimental design of research has been predominant in educational research, qualitative research methods have gained increasing acceptance, particularly over the past 10 years (Anzul, Evans, King, & Tellier-Robinson, 2001) and has undergone an interesting evolution which has been exemplified by disputes concerning the relative merits of quantitative and qualitative approaches (Smeyers, 2001). In some discussions regarding the debate over qualitative and quantitative research, it often seems as if statistics and hypothesis testing has dictated the research process rather than the research problem and the phenomenon being researched itself (Poggenpoel, Myburgh, & Van Der Linde, 2001). Qualitative research studies investigate the quality of relationships, activities, situations, or materials (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996) rather than reducing the respondents to mere numbers (Poggenpoel et al., 2001). Qualitative research methods involve the systematic collection, organization, and interpretation of textual material derived from talk or observation (Malterud, 2001). It is used in the exploration of meanings of social phenomena as experienced by individuals themselves, in their natural context.

One of the main characteristics of qualitative research is the focus on the intensive study of specific instances of phenomenon (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). When using qualitative research, the researcher may want to obtain an in-depth look at a particular

individual, situation, or set of materials that could not be obtained by the use of quantitative research methods (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). Cassell and Symon, (1994) believe that there is not a general definition of qualitative research and the term just serves as an umbrella covering many interpretative techniques. There are general characteristics that can assist in understanding qualitative research. Some of these characteristics include (Cassell & Symon, 1994; Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996; Gall et al., 1996):

1. The natural setting is the direct source of data, and the researcher is the main instrument.
2. Data are collected in the form of words and pictures.
3. Concern is with process as well as product.
4. There is a tendency to analyze the data inductively.
5. How people make sense out of their lives is a major concern to qualitative researchers.
6. There is flexibility in the process of conducting the research.
7. There is an emphasis on subjectivity rather than on objectivity.
8. There is a preference for a holistic description of complex phenomenon.

These general characteristics of qualitative research may assist individuals in understanding the definition as well as the impetus of qualitative research.

Steps of Qualitative Research

The steps taken while conducting qualitative research are not as distinct as they are in quantitative research and the steps may overlap and are sometimes even conducted

concurrently. Even though the steps in qualitative research are not as distinct as they are in quantitative research, several steps can be identified (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996).

The first step involves the formulation of a research problem to identify a phenomenon in which the researcher is interested or worthy of investigating (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996; Gall et al., 1996). Usually the research problem is grounded in the researcher's personal experience with a particular type of student, instructional program, or other phenomenon (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). Once the research problem has been identified, it needs to be translated into explicit questions or objectives.

The next step in performing a qualitative study involves identifying the participants in the study in which purposeful sampling is used (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996; Gall et al., 1996). Random sampling, which is generally used in quantitative research, is usually not feasible since the researcher wants to ensure that he/she obtains a sample that is uniquely suited to the intent of the study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). The particular case or individual to be studied may be selected for various purposes (e.g., the case is typical, it reflects the phenomenon of interest to an extreme extent, it is a deviant case of special interests, or it is politically important) (Gall et al., 1996).

As indicated by Fraenkel and Wallen (1996), the next step is generating the hypothesis which emerges from the data as the study progresses. Hypotheses in qualitative research are not always posed at the beginning of the study by the researcher, instead they emerge from the data as the study progresses. A typical qualitative study may begin with a few, if any, hypotheses being posed by the researcher, but several may be formulated, reconsidered, dropped, and modified as the study proceeds.

Collection of data is another important step in qualitative research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996; Gall et al., 1996) which can be accomplished through observation and interviewing techniques (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). Hartley (1994) asserts the importance of collecting data in a systematic rather than ad hoc manner, although flexibility is also an important component. Qualitative data collection differs from quantitative data collection in that participants in a qualitative study are not manipulated, divided into groups, or observed at the end of the study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). Data is continually collected throughout the study through the use of observations, interviews, and the examination of various documents that may be important to the phenomenon being studied.

Another method of data collection in a qualitative study could be completed through the use of a focus group. As Krueger (1988) explains, focus groups offer an alternative means to obtaining information from people which can provide valuable insights to the phenomena being studied. Focus groups generally encompass five features including (a) people, who (b) possess certain characteristics, (c) provide data (d) of a qualitative nature (e) in a focused discussion. The groups are typically comprised of seven to ten people but the size can be as little as four to as many as twelve. The group should be small enough for everyone to have the opportunity to share insights, but large enough to gather diversity of perceptions. Participants should be people who are similar to each other and are usually composed of people who do not know each other. There should also be unfamiliarity between the interviewer and the participants.

Focus groups typically produce data of interest to researchers rather than trying to reach consensus, provide recommendations, or to make decisions among alternatives

(Krueger, 1988). The focus group pays attention to the perceptions of individuals and, generally, have a rather narrow purpose to best determine the perceptions. The qualitative data gathered through focus groups provide insights into the participants' attitudes, perceptions, and opinions. The data are solicited through open-ended questions to which respondents are able to determine the manner in which they respond. During the focus group, the researcher serves several functions including moderator, listener, observer, and eventually analyst.

Lastly, drawing conclusions may be considered as the culminating step, but the qualitative researcher continuously draws conclusions throughout the study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996; Gall et al., 1996; Hartley, 1994) which can be a strength in qualitative research as it allows for theory development which is grounded in empirical evidence (Hartley, 1994). It is important for the qualitative researcher to spend time analyzing the data, at least informally, while data collection is still in progress (Gall et al., 1996). Because of the continuous formulation of interpretations, researchers find the results more or less integrated with other steps in the research process (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996).

General Benefits of Qualitative Research

For many years, researchers have argued that quantitative research is the only kind of true scientific research and deride qualitative research methods (Poggenpoel et al., 2001). Generally, the domination of the experimental paradigm in educational research has resulted in a preponderance of studies done in controlled settings that usually have very little resemblance to the complex nature of real life situations (Anzul et al., 2001). On the other hand, qualitative researchers make substantial contributions to scholarship by

describing not only how research is conceptualized, but also how it products are finally presented and understood (Meloy, 1994). Qualitative research essentially yields multifaceted findings which are often beyond the original focus of a study in which participants may reveal unexpected abilities, strengths, and coping strategies when their performances are viewed in natural settings and authentic situations (Anzul et al., 2001).

One aspect of qualitative research that has been an area of contention is that of generalizability. Quantitative proponents believe that researchers using qualitative research methods can make conclusions about the participants in the research, but they can rarely make statements which reflect broader populations (Underhill, 1995). When conducting qualitative research, the findings may not be generalizable in the experimental sense but they can guide educators toward building educational programs based on student strengths (Anzul et al., 2001).

Qualitative research yielding positive findings about student's accomplishments has the potential to move special educators beyond the deficit perspective that is pervasive in special education. Through reading, discussing, and engaging in qualitative research methods, special educators are given the opportunity to improve classroom effectiveness and increase the success of students.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

This chapter delineates the purpose of the study as well as the research questions that guided the data collection process. A detailed explanation of the subjects, data collection, and data analysis are provided in regards to the research which has been completed by Region IX Educational Service Center (ESC). Methods that were used for the qualitative component of the study are described in depth.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was threefold. The first intent was to examine the differences among three ethnicities (i.e., African American, Caucasian, and Hispanics) on perceptions regarding special education services from parent responses on a survey. A second intent was to examine differences in parental understanding and satisfaction within the various disability categories (i.e., auditory impairments, other health impairments, orthopedic impairments, autism, mental retardation, learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, visual impairments, speech impairments, and traumatic brain injury) among various ethnic groups (i.e., African American, Caucasian, and Hispanics). A third intent was to determine differences from a qualitative perspective of parental perceptions and general satisfaction regarding special education from three different ethnic categories (i.e., African American, Caucasain, and Hispanic).

Research Questions

Three research questions guided this study.

Research Question 1

What differences exist among three ethnic groups (i.e., African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic) on perceptions regarding special education services in the area of understanding and satisfaction based on the results from a state-wide parent survey?

Research Question 2

What differences exist among three ethnic groups (i.e., African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic) on parental understanding and satisfaction within disability categories (i.e., auditory impairments, other health impairments, orthopedic impairments, autism, mental retardation, learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, visual impairments, speech impairments, and traumatic brain injury) based on the results from a state-wide parent survey?

Research Question 3

What differences exist regarding parental understanding and satisfaction within three ethnic groups (i.e., African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic) when parents are given the opportunity to respond while participating in a focus group?

Data Collection

The original study upon which this study is based was conducted by Region IX, ESC, in Wichita Falls, Texas. The ESC distributed 32,000 surveys to parents across the State of Texas. The parent survey packet was distributed to each school district to be sent home with students, or by some other means. With an almost 16% return rate, a total of 5,210 (16%) surveys were returned, with 4,968 (15.5%) actually able to be used for the analysis report. Sampling procedures consisted of partitioning the students into twenty ESC regions to make certain there was geographical representation. Then, students were selected randomly within different disability categories. Surveys were sent to school

districts in both Spanish and English. The survey questions were developed by volunteers from the Parent Coordination Network, the State Parent Training Committee, the Parent Training and Information Center, and representatives from ESC during a two-day meeting in the Spring of 2003. Academic Information Management, Inc. (AIM), Austin, Texas, was selected to provide support for the survey process. Committee members reviewed sample surveys from other states, as well as commercially available instruments, while simultaneously considering the Texas Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) Guide for parents. Two versions of a one-page survey (See Appendices B & C) with overlapping questions were developed with a total of 54 unique items included which covered the following areas:

- Eligibility and referral
- ARD and Individual Education Program (IEP)
- Educational services
- Records, training, and help
- Transition
- Discipline
- Information sources
- General satisfaction

Procedures

Data for the quantitative component were collected and disaggregated by Region IX ESC. These data are evaluated for the quantitative portion of the study. Parental satisfaction and understanding of the special education process was compared across ethnicities and among various disabilities.

For the qualitative aspect of the study, one focus group for each ethnic group (i.e., African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic) was conducted with a minimum of four parents in each focus group. The parents selected for focus group participation had a child in some type of special education program for at least one year or had a child that was in a special education program but was now released. Letters of invitation to participate were sent to parents who fit the criteria for the study after district approval was obtained. The parents were randomly selected with the assistance of various teachers throughout two independent school districts (i.e., parents contacts in the neighborhood, through special education staff at other schools, and through the researcher's school). Availability of the parents in various districts was the determining factor for participants. The questioning route used in the focus groups was derived from the questionnaire used in the study conducted by Region IX (See Appendix A).

Focus groups were held at a location convenient for parents who elected to participate. The focus groups were held at Kent Elementary which is located in north Carrollton. The researcher served as the moderator for the focus group. The focus group discussion was recorded and transcribed (See Appendices G, H, and I).

Data Analysis

Data from the structured response format portion of the survey are presented in percentages and numbers of parents in the various response categories illustrated in a series of tables. These data remain consistent with the format used by AIM. The table below indicates how many parents participated in the survey disaggregated by ethnic group. Table A indicates how many parents responded to questions regarding satisfaction of their child's education, satisfaction of special education services,

satisfaction with the parent's degree of participation, and understanding the child's eligibility for special education services.

Table A

Parental Responses for First Four Questions

Disability Category	African American	Caucasian	Hispanic
AU	32	146	51
ED	47	191	72
LD	143	613	501
MR	76	191	133
OHI	65	320	109
SI	55	381	196

Table B indicates how many parents responded to questions referring to parental understanding of the role they play in the child's evaluation process, understanding decisions in the child's placement, understanding the child's Individual Education Plan (IEP), understanding the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) meeting, and understanding how special education services are delivered in the general education setting.

Table B

Parental Participants for Last Six Questions

Disability Category	African American	Caucasian	Hispanic
AU	17	82	27
ED	23	101	41
LD	68	310	234
MR	32	90	68
OHI	35	170	50
SI	27	204	98

Separate analysis of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted for each of the nine questions to determine if there were any differences in variances. The ANOVA data are

presented in a series of tables. Individual ANOVAs were conducted for ethnic groups for each of the nine questions. If a statistical difference was found on the particular question being analyzed by an ANOVA test, a Tukey post hoc test were then conducted to determine where specifically the differences were. The mean difference was significant at the .05 level ($p < .05$). The areas that were disaggregated and examined include:

- Understanding among ethnic groups (i.e., Caucasian, Hispanic, and African American).
- Satisfaction among ethnic groups (i.e., Caucasian, Hispanic, and African American).
- Understanding among ethnic groups across various disability groups (i.e., auditory impairments, autism, emotional disturbances, learning disabilities, mental retardation, other health impairments, orthopedic impairments, speech impairments, and traumatic brain injury, and visual impairments).
- Satisfaction among ethnic groups throughout various disability groups (i.e., auditory impairments, autism, emotional disturbances, learning disabilities, mental retardation, other health impairments, orthopedic impairments, speech impairments, and traumatic brain injury, and visual impairments).
- Tables are used to illustrate the satisfaction level and understanding across ethnic groups as well as ethnic groups within disability categories.

For the qualitative portion of this study, focus groups were utilized. Focus group discussions were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for themes. Throughout the focus group process, consideration was given to recommendations made by Krueger (1988):

1. Start analyzing while the group is still in progress.

2. Analyze again immediately following the focus group.
3. Within hours of the focus group, analyze each individual focus group.
4. Within day analyze the series of focus groups.
5. Prepare the report.

During the first step, the researcher listened for inconsistent or vague comments in order to probe for understanding. This gave the opportunity for the researcher to clarify issues that may have caused confusion during subsequent analysis. Immediately after the focus group, the researcher drew a diagram of the seating arrangement and made notes of any themes, hunches, interpretations, and ideas. Once the other focus groups had been conducted, a comparison and contrast of the focus groups were made.

Within hours after each focus group, the researcher transcribed the tapes, taking into account the questioning route that had been utilized. An initial report was prepared for each focus group in a question-by-question format with the inclusion of significant quotes. At this point in the analysis, finding big ideas became important. After all focus groups were conducted and transcriptions were completed, the next step involved comparing and contrasting by categories throughout the individual focus groups. Emerging themes were evaluated by each question and then overall. Following completion of the theme development, a report was written.

There are software programs available to aid researchers in data analysis and theme development, such as NUD*IST, The Ethnograph, and HyperResearch. However, the researcher elected not to use a software package and used a manual sort method to help develop themes.

The specific technique used by the researcher to develop themes was a process that is most comfortable and understandable to the researcher and is a derivative of what Krueger (2002) suggested when manually analyzing data. After all three focus groups were transcribed, ten copies were made for a total of thirty copies. Each copy of the three focus group transcriptions was used to analyze one question. For each of the ten questions, there was one copy of each focus group transcription. The question and answers for the particular question being analyzed were highlighted and compared to the other focus groups.

When themes began to emerge, each theme was assigned a numerical value. The numerical values assigned to the themes were then placed on a separate sheet. The transcripts were then analyzed again to ensure that answers from the participants that fit into a particular theme category were cut and pasted to the sheet. To enable the researcher to easily differentiate the groups, the African American focus group transcription was printed on yellow paper, the Caucasian focus group transcription was printed on pink paper, and the Hispanic focus group transcription was printed on purple paper. After the answers were categorized by theme, a summary was written noting similarities and differences among themes and questions.

To ensure that the analysis was systematic and verifiable, the information accrued from the qualitative component of the study was reviewed and analyzed before the existing descriptive statistics from Region IX ESC were evaluated. This assisted in filtering out possible preconceptions or expectations that might have been formed if the descriptive statistics were reviewed first. Any trends that emerged were also compared to

literature that has been reviewed regarding parental satisfaction and understanding of the special education process.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are presented in two distinctive sections. First, data from Region IX ESC, which were obtained with the permission of Region IX through a state-wide parent survey, have been disaggregated by ethnic groups and disability categories and then evaluated and compared by reviewing numbers and percentages of parent responses. ANOVAs were then conducted on the data obtained from Region IX and presented in table format. Secondly, findings from the three focus groups (i.e., African American, Caucasian and Hispanic) were reviewed in the order the questions were presented in the focus groups. Each of the questions that were asked in the focus groups were evaluated and compared across the three focus groups.

Upon completion of the focus groups, each focus group was transcribed from the tape recording and notes made by the researcher during the focus group sessions. The transcripts from the focus groups can be found in Appendix G (African American), Appendix H (Caucasian), and Appendix I (Hispanic). The technique that was used to evaluate and compare the focus groups was a cut and paste procedure similar to what Krueger (2002) suggested when manually analyzing data.

Region IX Data Analysis

The questions (Appendix A) from the Region IX survey regarding parental understanding and satisfaction of the special education process were used to compare parental responses among ethnicities as well as among ethnicities in the various disability categories. For a more clear representation of the survey results, data will be presented in table format. The same nine questions that were used for the focus groups were used to

disaggregate the data obtained from Region IX ESC. Separate analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted for each question by ethnic and disability groupings.

Research Question 1

What differences exist among three ethnic groups (i.e., African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic) on perceptions regarding special education services in the area of understanding and satisfaction based on the results from a state-wide parent survey?

Satisfied with Education. The percentage of parents in the African American and

Table 1

Parental Responses on the Degree of Satisfaction with the Education their Child was Receiving.

Ethnic Group	Very Satisfied		Somewhat Satisfied		Somewhat Unsatisfied		Very Unsatisfied		No Reply	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
African American	234	51.2	165	36.1	41	9.0	17	3.7	3	0.7
Caucasian	1035	51.8	731	36.6	153	7.6	81	4.0	8	0.4
Hispanic	692	60.2	367	31.9	55	4.8	36	3.1	18	1.5

Caucasian ethnic groups who were very satisfied and somewhat satisfied with the education their child is receiving was very similar (Table 1). African American and Caucasian parents were less satisfied than the Hispanic parents. As indicated in Table 1a a significant difference between Caucasian parental responses African American, and Hispanic parental responses was indicated.

Table 1a

ANOVA Results for Parental Responses on the Degree of Satisfaction with the

Education their Child is Receiving.

Dependent Variable	Ethnic Group 1	Ethnic Group 2	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Satisfaction with Education Child is Receiving	African American	Caucasian	.0979*	.02119	.000
	African American	Hispanic	-.0351	.02257	.266
	Caucasian	African American	-.0979*	.02119	.000
	Caucasian	Hispanic	-.1329*	.01509	.000
	Hispanic	African American	.0351	.02257	.266
		Caucasian	.1329*	.01509	.000

*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

Satisfied with Special Education. About the same percentage of parents in all three ethnic groups expressed being very satisfied with their child’s education as they did with the special education services their child is receiving (Table 2). Fewer parents in all three

Table 2

Parental Responses Regarding the Satisfaction with the Special Education

Services Child was Receiving.

Ethnic Group	Very Satisfied		Somewhat Satisfied		Somewhat Unsatisfied		Very Unsatisfied		No Reply	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
African American	231	51.6	155	34.6	42	9.4	20	4.5	12	2.6
Caucasian	1040	52.3	681	34.3	180	9.1	87	4.4	20	1.0
Hispanic	685	60.0	345	30.2	71	6.2	41	3.6	26	2.2

Table 2a

ANOVA Results for Parental Responses Regarding the Satisfaction with the

Special Education Services Child is Receiving.

Dependent Variable	Ethnic Group 1	Ethnic Group 2	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Satisfaction with Special Education	African American	Caucasian	.06610	.04669	.333
	African American	Hispanic	.14305*	.04972	.011
	Caucasian	African American	-.06610	.04669	.333
	Caucasian	Hispanic	.07695	.03324	.054
	Hispanic	African American	-.14305*	.04972	.011
		Caucasian	-.07695	.03324	.054

*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

ethnic groups were somewhat satisfied with special education services than with general education services which resulted in more parents being somewhat or very unsatisfied with their child's special education services which can also be seen in Table 2. A significant difference existed between Hispanic parents and African American parents in reference to their satisfaction with special education services (Table 2a).

Satisfied with Degree of Participation. Parents in all three ethnic groups were more satisfied with the degree of participation in relation to decisions about their child's special education services than they were in their child's education and special education as shown by Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3. The Hispanic parents indicated more satisfaction in the category of very satisfied while African American parents indicated more satisfaction in the somewhat satisfied category (Table 3). Between all three ethnic categories, the percentage of satisfaction overall was very close with African American parents indicating a satisfaction rate of 91.7%, Caucasian parents indicated a 91%

satisfaction rate, and Hispanic parents indicated a 92.3% satisfaction rate (Table 3).

Caucasian and Hispanic parental responses revealed a significant difference when responding to their satisfaction level with their degree of participation with decisions related to special education services (Table 3a).

Table 3

Parental Responses Regarding Satisfaction with Degree of Participation with Decisions Relating to Special Education Services.

Ethnic Group	Very Satisfied		Somewhat Satisfied		Somewhat Unsatisfied		Very Unsatisfied		No Reply	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
African American	263	58.7	148	33.0	28	6.2	9	2.0	12	2.6
Caucasian	1040	63.1	681	27.9	180	6.3	87	2.6	20	1.1
Hispanic	745	65.5	305	26.8	60	5.3	27	2.4	31	2.7

Table 3a

ANOVA Results for Parental Responses Regarding Satisfaction with Degree of Participation with Decisions Relating to Special Education Service.

Dependent Variable	Ethnic Group 1	Ethnic Group 2	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Satisfaction with Degree of Participation in Special Education	African American	Caucasian	-.08173	.04587	.176
	African American	Hispanic	.06714	.04885	.354
	Caucasian	African American	.08173	.04587	.176
	Caucasian	Hispanic	.14886*	.03265	.000
	Hispanic	African American	-.06714	.04885	.354
	Hispanic	Caucasian	-.14886*	.03265	.000

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

Understanding of Child's Eligibility in Special Education. Caucasian parents indicated the highest level of understanding regarding their child's eligibility (Table 4). African American and Hispanic parents indicated an 85% understanding rate. Hispanic parents expressed the highest percentage of not understanding as well as the highest percentage of no response (Table 4). As Table 4a discloses significant difference existed between Caucasian parental responses with the two other ethnic categories. There was no significant difference in parental responses regarding understanding of eligibility between African American parents and Hispanic parents.

Table 4

Parental Responses Regarding the Understanding of Child's Eligibility in Special Education.

Ethnic Group	Completely Understand		Somewhat Understand		Do Not Understand		No Response	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
African American	391	85.2	61	13.3	7	1.5	1	0.2
Caucasian	1890	94.4	98	4.9	14	0.7	6	0.3
Hispanic	986	85.3	137	11.9	33	2.9	12	1.0

Table 4a

ANOVA Results for Parental Responses Regarding the Understanding of Child's Eligibility in Special Education.

Dependent Variable	Ethnic Group 1	Ethnic Group 2	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Understanding Child's Eligibility in Special Education	African American	Caucasian	.09785*	.02119	.000
	African American	Hispanic	-.03506	.02257	.266
Understanding Child's Eligibility in Special Education	Caucasian	African American	-.09785*	.02119	.000
		Hispanic	-.13291*	.01509	.000
	Hispanic	African American	.03506	.02257	.266
		Caucasian	.13291*	.01509	.000

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

Understanding of Parental Role in Evaluation Process. A large majority of parents (97%) said that they understood their role in their child's evaluation process (Table 5). There was a significant difference between Caucasian and Hispanic parental responses when responding to how well they understood their role in the child's evaluation process (Table 5a).

Table 5

Parental Responses on the Understanding of Parental Role in Child's Evaluation Process.

Ethnic Group	Completely Understand		Somewhat Understand		Do Not Understand		No Response	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
African American	186	82.3	35	15.5	5	2.2	0	0.0
Caucasian	896	86.2	119	11.4	25	2.4	0	0.0
Hispanic	451	81.1	93	16.7	12	2.2	5	0.9

Table 5a

ANOVA Results for Parental Responses on the Understanding of Parental Role in Child's Evaluation Process.

Dependent Variable	Ethnic Group 1	Ethnic Group 2	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Understanding Parental Role in Child's Evaluation Process	African American	Caucasian	.03662	.03405	.529
	African American	Hispanic	-.03618	.03655	.583
	Caucasian	African American	-.03662	.03405	.529
	Caucasian	Hispanic	-.07279*	.02430	.008
	Hispanic	African American	.03618	.03655	.583
		Caucasian	.07279*	.02430	.008

*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

Understanding of How Decisions are Made Regarding Placement.

Parental responses among ethnicities on their understanding placement decisions did not reveal a large difference. African American and Caucasian participants revealed

Table 6

Parental Responses on Understanding How Decisions are Made Regarding Placement.

Ethnic Group	Completely Understand		Somewhat Understand		Do Not Understand		No Response	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
African American	145	64.4	72	32.0	8	3.6	1	0.4
Caucasian	746	71.8	260	25.0	33	3.2	1	0.1
Hispanic	386	69.8	143	25.9	24	4.3	8	1.4

Table 6a

*ANOVA Results for Parental Responses on Understanding How Decisions are**Made Regarding Placement.*

Dependent Variable	Ethnic Group 1	Ethnic Group 2	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Understanding Decisions Regarding Placement Decisions	African American	Caucasian	-.27404*	.03951	.000
	African American	Hispanic	-.62389*	.04241	.000
	Caucasian	African American	.27404*	.03951	.000
	Caucasian	Hispanic	-.34985*	.02820	.000
	Hispanic	African American	.62389*	.04241	.000
		Caucasian	.34985*	.02820	.000

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

approximately a 96% overall understanding (i.e., completely understand and somewhat understand) rate while Hispanic participants revealed a 95% overall understanding rate (Table 6). A significant difference existed among Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic parental responses (Table 6a). Significant differences also existed among Hispanic parental responses and African American responses (Table 6a).

Understanding Child's IEP. As shown in Table 7, parents in the African American and Hispanic group expressed a lower percentage of completely understanding than Caucasian parents. However, overall understanding (i.e., completely understand and somewhat understand) of their child's IEP indicated little difference between African American and Caucasian percentages. Overall understanding (i.e., completely understand and somewhat understand) for Hispanic parents was a few percentage points lower than the other two groups which consequently raised the percentage of Hispanics not

Table 7

Parental Responses of Understanding Child's IEP.

Ethnic Group	Completely Understand		Somewhat Understand		Do Not Understand		No Response	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
African American	150	66.7	62	27.6	13	5.8	1	0.4
Caucasian	770	74.4	221	21.4	44	4.3	5	0.5
Hispanic	360	65.2	149	27.0	43	7.8	9	1.6

Table 7a

ANOVA Results for Parental Responses of Understanding Child's IEP.

Dependent Variable	Ethnic Group 1	Ethnic Group 2	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Parental Understanding of Child's IEP	African American	Caucasian	.09112	.04569	.114
	African American	Hispanic	-.06437	.04905	.388
	Caucasian	African American	-.09112	.04569	.114
	Caucasian	Hispanic	-.15548*	.03261	.000
	Hispanic	African American	.06437	.04905	.388
		Caucasian	.15548*	.03261	.000

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

understanding the IEP (Table 7). ANOVA results indicated that there was a significant difference in responses between Caucasian parental responses and Hispanic parental responses regarding understanding of the child's IEP (Table 7a).

Understanding the ARD. Data from Table 8 show Caucasian parents having the highest number (98.6%) of parents understanding the ARD meeting. Hispanic parents had a higher overall understanding (i.e., completely understand and somewhat understand;

96.1%) of the ARD meeting than African American parents (94.7%; Table 8). A significant difference between Caucasian and Hispanic parental responses existed regarding the level of understanding at an ARD meeting which can be seen in Table 8a.

Table 8

Parental Response Regarding Level of Understanding at an ARD Meeting.

Ethnic Group	Completely Understand		Somewhat Understand		Do Not Understand		No Response	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
African American	183	81.0	31	13.7	12	5.3	0	0.0
Caucasian	889	85.6	135	13.0	15	1.4	1	0.1
Hispanic	428	77.0	106	19.1	22	4.0	5	0.9

Table 8a

ANOVA Results on Parental Response Regarding Level of Understanding at an ARD Meeting.

Dependent Variable	Ethnic Group 1	Ethnic Group 2	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Parental Understanding at ARD Meetings	African American	Caucasian	.08182	.03576	.058
		Hispanic	-.05075	.03838	.383
	Caucasian	Af Am	-.08182	.03576	.058
		Hispanic	-.13258*	.02552	.000
		Af Am	.05075	.03838	.383
Hispanic	Caucasian	.13258*	.02552	.000	

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

Understanding Special Education Services in General Education Setting. Another area in which African American parents indicated a low percentage of understanding

pertained to how special education services were applied in the general education setting (Table 9). As shown in Table 9a, Caucasian parents indicated that they had the highest

Table 9

Parental Responses Regarding How Special Education Services Can Be Delivered in a General Education Setting.

Ethnic Group	Yes		No		Not Sure		No Response	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
African American	137	60.9	66	29.3	22	9.8	1	0.4
Caucasian	723	69.5	254	24.4	63	6.1	0	0.0
Hispanic	375	67.7	139	25.1	40	7.2	7	1.2

Table 9a

ANOVA Results on Parental Responses Regarding How Special Education Services Can Be Delivered in a General Education Setting.

Dependent Variable	Ethnic Group 1	Ethnic Group 2	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Understanding of How Special Ed. is Delivered in General Ed. Setting	African American	Caucasian	.13462*	.04652	.011
		Hispanic	.07219	.04994	.318
	Caucasian	Af Am	-.13462*	.04652	.011
		Hispanic	-.06242	.03321	.145
	Hispanic	Af Am	-.07219	.04994	.318
		Caucasian	.06242	.03321	.145

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

level of understanding. Consequently, a significant difference was found between Caucasian and African American parental responses (Table 9a).

Summary of Results Among Ethnic Groups. In all three areas of satisfaction examined in this study, Hispanic parents indicated the highest percentage of satisfaction. African American and Caucasian parents followed behind Hispanic parents. They had about the same percentage of overall satisfaction in their child's education, special education and the degree that parents are participating in the decisions.

In all three ethnic groups, parents indicated less understanding of the IEP than understanding of the placement decisions of their child. Parents in all three ethnic groups indicated the lowest level of understanding in the area of how special education services can be delivered in the general education setting. Understanding their child's IEP followed with the second lowest level of understanding in all three ethnic groups.

Caucasian parents had the highest overall understanding (i.e., completely understand and somewhat understand) of the ARD meeting with only 1.4% of parents expressing a lack of understanding. Parents in all three ethnic groups indicated the highest level of overall understanding (i.e., completely understand and somewhat understand) with the eligibility component, with parental role in the evaluation process being the second highest level of overall understanding (i.e., completely understand and somewhat understand). The third highest level of overall understanding (i.e., completely understand and somewhat understand) by all three ethnic groups was regarding how placement decisions were made.

Parents in all three ethnic groups indicated similar percentage points (approximately 97 %) regarding overall understanding (i.e., completely understand and somewhat understand) in their child's evaluation process. Similar understanding levels were reported regarding understanding of placement decisions (approximately 96 %).

Many significant differences were found when comparing understanding and satisfaction of special education services among ethnic groups. Significant differences existed between Hispanic parents and the other two ethnic groups on all items except regarding how special education services are delivered in the general education setting. Items relating to how well parents understood eligibility, placement decisions, parental role in evaluation processes, IEP and ARD meetings resulted in significant differences between Hispanic and Caucasian parents. Another significant difference existed among Caucasian and Hispanic parents in the degree of satisfaction with parental participation in the special education process and satisfaction of their child's education in general.

Other differences existed between African American and Hispanic parents in the areas of how well parents were satisfied with special education services as well as understanding decisions related to placement in special education. More Hispanic parents reported being satisfied with special education service than African American parents by a difference of 4%.

Significant differences existed between African American and Caucasian parents in three areas of understanding including eligibility, decisions on placement, and how special education services are delivered in general education. A significant difference was also found between African American and Caucasian parents in the area of being satisfied with their child's education in general.

Research indicates that Caucasian parents have a better understanding of the special education process than other ethnic groups with the lowest amount of satisfaction level. The Hispanic parents indicated the least understanding of the special education process with the highest level of satisfaction. The fact that so many significant differences

existed between Caucasian and Hispanic parental responses regarding understanding indicates that there is a major deficit in Hispanic understanding of the special education process which could be due to language issues.

Research Question 2

What differences exist among three ethnic groups (i.e., African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic) on parental understanding and satisfaction within selected disability categories (i.e., other health impairments [OHI], autism [AU], mental retardation [MR], learning disabilities [LD], emotional disturbances [ED], and speech impairments [SI]) based on the results from a state-wide parent survey?

The results from the state-wide parent survey are displayed in tables and reviewed in the following section.

Satisfaction with Education Child is Receiving.

As shown in Table 10, parents in the Hispanic group indicated the most overall satisfaction with their child's education (i.e., very satisfied and somewhat satisfied) in all disability categories with the exception of the category of ED in which African American parents expressed more satisfaction by about one percentage point more. African American parents indicated the least overall satisfaction (i.e., somewhat dissatisfied and very dissatisfied) in the categories of SI, OHI, and AU while Caucasian parents indicated the least overall satisfaction (i.e., completely satisfied and somewhat satisfied) in the categories of ED and LD.

Table 10

Parental Responses Regarding Satisfaction with the Education the Child was Receiving.

	<i>N</i> Reporting	Very Satisfied		Somewhat Satisfied		Somewhat Dissatisfied		Very Dissatisfied		No Reply	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
AU											
Af Am	32	10	32.3	16	51.6	4	12.9	1	3.2	1	3.1
Cauc	146	61	42.1	67	46.2	8	5.5	9	6.2	1	0.7
Hisp	51	24	48.0	24	48.0	2	4.0	0	0.0	1	2.0
ED											
Af Am	47	20	42.6	22	46.8	3	6.4	2	4.3	0	0.0
Cauc	191	87	45.8	73	38.4	21	11.1	9	4.7	1	0.5
Hisp	72	37	52.1	25	35.2	7	9.9	2	2.8	1	1.4
LD											
Af Am	143	78	54.5	49	34.3	15	10.5	1	0.7	0	0.0
Cauc	613	282	46.2	257	42.1	44	7.2	28	4.6	2	0.3
Hisp	501	291	59.3	156	31.8	23	4.7	21	4.3	10	2.0
MR											
Af Am	76	45	59.2	23	30.3	6	7.9	2	2.6	0	0.0
Cauc	191	93	48.9	65	34.2	21	11.1	11	5.8	1	0.5
Hisp	133	77	59.2	43	33.1	6	4.6	4	3.1	3	2.3
OHI											
Af Am	65	31	48.4	22	34.4	6	9.4	5	7.8	1	1.5
Cauc	320	159	49.8	117	36.7	32	10.0	11	3.4	1	0.3
Hisp	109	57	52.3	39	35.8	9	8.3	4	3.7	0	0.0
SI											
Af Am	55	30	55.6	17	31.5	4	7.4	3	5.6	1	1.8
Cauc	381	259	68.3	97	25.6	15	4.0	8	2.1	2	0.5
Hisp	196	139	72.0	44	22.8	7	3.6	3	1.6	3	1.5

Satisfaction with Special Education Services.

African American parents expressed the most overall dissatisfaction with special education services (i.e., somewhat dissatisfied and very dissatisfied) in the disability categories of OHI and SI while Caucasian parents expressed the most overall dissatisfaction (i.e., somewhat dissatisfied and very dissatisfied) with special education services in the disability categories of AU, LD, and MR which can be reviewed in Table 11. Hispanic parents only expressed the highest overall dissatisfaction (i.e., somewhat

Table 11

Satisfaction with the Special Education Services Child was Receiving.

	N Reporting	Very Satisfied		Somewhat Satisfied		Somewhat Dissatisfied		Very Dissatisfied		No Response	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
AU											
African Am	32	11	35.5	15	48.4	3	9.7	2	6.5	1	3.1
Caucasian	146	59	41.0	58	40.3	14	9.7	13	9.0	2	1.4
Hispanic	51	28	54.9	18	35.3	5	9.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
ED											
African Am	47	22	46.8	17	36.2	5	10.6	3	6.4	0	0.0
Caucasian	191	83	43.9	75	39.7	20	10.6	11	5.8	2	1.0
Hispanic	72	36	50.0	23	31.9	9	12.5	4	5.6	0	0.0
LD											
African Am	143	75	54.0	54	38.8	7	5.0	3	2.2	4	2.8
Caucasian	613	301	49.4	226	37.1	55	9.0	27	4.4	4	0.7
Hispanic	501	291	60.4	156	29.6	23	5.1	21	4.9	10	2.8
MR											
African Am	76	47	64.4	17	23.3	5	6.8	4	5.5	3	3.9
Caucasian	191	100	53.2	58	30.9	20	10.6	10	5.3	3	1.6
Hispanic	133	80	61.1	37	28.2	12	9.2	2	1.5	2	1.5
OHI											
African Am	65	29	46.0	21	33.3	10	15.9	3	4.8	2	3.1
Caucasian	320	160	50.0	114	35.6	34	10.6	12	3.8	0	0.0
Hispanic	109	61	57.5	36	34.0	3	2.8	6	5.7	3	2.8
SI											
African Am	55	27	50.9	18	34.0	6	11.3	2	3.8	2	3.6
Caucasian	381	246	65.8	99	26.5	20	5.3	9	2.4	7	1.8
Hispanic	196	123	64.7	52	27.4	12	6.3	3	1.6	6	3.1

dissatisfied and very dissatisfied) in the disability category of ED. African American parents indicated the highest overall dissatisfaction (i.e., somewhat dissatisfied and very dissatisfied) in both the education their child was receiving and special education services their child was receiving under the OHI disability category (Table 11).

Satisfaction with the Degree of Participation.

African American parents indicated the highest overall satisfaction with the degree of participation (i.e., very satisfied and somewhat satisfied) in the disability categories of MR, LD, and ED while Caucasian parents indicated the highest overall satisfaction with

Table 12

Satisfied with Degree of Participation with Decisions Relating to Special Ed.

	N Reporting	Very Satisfied		Somewhat Satisfied		Somewhat Dissatisfied		Very Dissatisfied		No Response	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
AU											
African Am	32	15	48.4	11	35.5	5	16.1	0	0.0	1	3.1
Caucasian	146	72	50.0	57	39.6	12	8.3	3	2.1	2	1.4
Hispanic	51	27	52.9	17	33.3	7	13.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
ED											
African Am	47	28	60.9	15	32.6	3	6.5	0	0.0	1	2.1
Caucasian	191	111	59.4	50	26.7	19	10.2	7	3.7	4	2.1
Hispanic	72	46	64.8	16	22.5	6	8.5	3	4.2	1	1.4
LD											
African Am	143	84	61.3	47	34.3	4	2.9	2	1.5	6	4.2
Caucasian	613	385	63.4	170	28.0	36	5.9	16	2.6	6	1.0
Hispanic	501	305	63.0	144	29.8	20	4.1	15	3.1	17	3.4
MR											
African Am	76	51	68.0	21	28.0	2	2.7	1	1.3	1	1.3
Caucasian	191	109	57.4	59	31.1	16	8.4	6	3.2	1	0.5
Hispanic	133	85	65.4	36	27.7	6	4.6	3	2.3	3	2.3
OHI											
African Am	65	36	56.2	18	28.1	8	12.5	2	3.1	1	1.5
Caucasian	320	199	62.8	95	30.0	17	5.4	6	1.9	3	0.9
Hispanic	109	74	70.5	26	24.8	3	2.9	2	1.9	4	3.7
SI											
African Am	55	27	50.9	19	35.8	4	7.5	3	5.7	2	3.6
Caucasian	381	274	73.1	76	20.3	16	4.3	9	2.4	6	1.6
Hispanic	196	141	73.8	35	18.3	12	6.3	3	1.6	5	2.6

the degree of participation (i.e., very satisfied and somewhat satisfied) in SI and AU disability categories (Table 12). Hispanic parents only expressed overall satisfaction (i.e., very satisfied and somewhat satisfied) in the area of OHI. In the OHI disability category, African American parents expressed an overall dissatisfaction (i.e., somewhat dissatisfied

and very dissatisfied) that was two times higher than the Caucasian parents and three times higher than the Hispanic parents.

Understanding Child's Eligibility in Special Education.

As shown in Table 13, in all disability categories, Caucasian parents reported having the highest overall level of understanding (i.e., completely understand and somewhat understand) the eligibility of their child's special education. Caucasian parents reported

Table 13

Understanding of Child's Eligibility in Special Education.

	<i>N</i> Reporting	Completely Understand		Somewhat Understand		Do Not Understand		No Response	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
AU									
African American	32	28	87.5	3	9.4	1	3.1	0	0.0
Caucasian	146	144	98.6	2	1.4	0	0.0	0	0.0
Hispanic	51	48	94.1	3	5.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
ED									
African American	47	40	87.0	6	13.0	0	0.0	1	2.1
Caucasian	191	176	92.6	14	7.4	0	0.0	1	0.5
Hispanic	72	60	83.3	9	12.5	3	4.2	0	0.0
LD									
African American	143	121	84.6	20	14.0	2	1.4	0	0.0
Caucasian	613	556	91.1	47	7.7	7	1.1	3	0.5
Hispanic	501	388	78.7	83	16.8	22	4.5	8	1.6
MR									
African American	76	66	86.8	9	11.8	1	1.3	0	0.0
Caucasian	191	186	97.4	5	2.6	0	0.0	0	0.0
Hispanic	133	127	96.2	5	3.8	0	0.0	1	0.8
OHI									
African American	65	51	78.5	13	20.0	1	1.5	0	0.0
Caucasian	320	306	95.6	11	3.4	3	0.9	0	0.0
Hispanic	109	100	92.6	7	6.5	1	0.9	1	0.9
SI									
African American	55	46	83.6	7	12.7	2	3.6	0	0.0
Caucasian	381	362	95.5	13	3.4	4	1.1	2	0.5
Hispanic	196	166	85.6	24	12.4	4	2.1	2	1.0

only one percent of not understanding in the disability categories of LD, OHI, and SI. In all other areas, one hundred percent of Caucasian parents indicated understanding their child's eligibility in special education. Hispanic parents expressed the highest percentage points of not understanding in the disability categories of LD and ED with approximately four percent reporting not understanding. African American parents indicated the highest level of not understanding their child's eligibility in special education in the disability categories of SI, OHI, MR, and AU.

Understanding of Parental Role in Child's Evaluation Process.

As shown in Table 14, Caucasian parents indicated the highest level of completely understating the evaluation process in all categories except in the MR disability categories in which African American parents reported almost the same percentage points of understanding (i.e., completely understand and somewhat understand). African American parents expressed highest percentage points on not understanding in the LD and AU categories while Caucasian parents expressed the highest percentage points of not understanding (i.e., do not understand) in the disability categories of SI, OHI, and MR. Hispanic parents expressed the highest percentage points of not understanding their child's evaluation process which was in the disability category of ED.

Table 14

Understanding of Parental Role in Child's Evaluation Process.

	N Reporting	Completely Understand		Somewhat Understand		Do Not Understand		No Response	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
AU									
African American	17	13	76.5	3	17.6	1	5.9	0	0.0
Caucasian	82	72	87.8	9	11.0	1	1.2	0	0.0
Hispanic	27	22	81.5	4	14.8	1	3.7	0	0.0
ED									
African American	23	18	78.3	5	21.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
Caucasian	101	86	85.1	13	12.9	2	2.0	0	0.0
Hispanic	41	30	73.2	10	24.4	1	2.4	0	0.0
LD									
African American	68	57	83.8	9	13.2	2	2.9	0	0.0
Caucasian	310	267	86.1	36	11.6	7	2.3	0	0.0
Hispanic	234	193	83.9	34	14.8	3	1.3	4	1.7
MR									
African American	32	26	81.2	5	15.6	1	3.1	0	0.0
Caucasian	90	73	81.1	11	12.2	6	6.7	0	0.0
Hispanic	68	54	79.4	11	16.2	3	4.4	0	0.0
OHI									
African American	35	29	82.9	6	17.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Caucasian	170	144	84.7	24	14.1	2	1.2	0	0.0
Hispanic	50	39	78.0	11	22.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
SI									
African American	27	22	81.5	5	18.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
Caucasian	204	181	88.7	18	8.8	5	2.5	0	0.0
Hispanic	98	79	81.4	17	17.5	1	1.0	1	1.0

Understanding Decisions in Child's Placement.

African American parents indicated 100 percent understanding (i.e., completely understand and somewhat understand) of how decisions are made regarding their child's placement in the disability categories of AU and SI as shown in Table 15. In the disability category of MR, all ethnic groups reported around 6 percentage points of not understanding how decisions are made in their child's placement. Seven percent of

Hispanic parents expressed not understanding decisions of placement in the disability categories of ED and AU.

Table 15

Understanding of How Decisions are Made in Regards to Child's Placement.

	N Reporting	Completely Understand		Somewhat Understand		Do Not Understand		No Response		
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
AU										
African American	17	10	58.8	7	41.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	
Caucasian	82	52	63.4	29	35.4	1	1.2	0	0.0	
Hispanic	27	20	74.1	5	18.5	2	7.4	0	0.0	
ED										
African American	23	14	60.9	8	34.8	1	4.3	0	0.0	
Caucasian	101	69	68.3	27	26.7	5	5.0	0	0.0	
Hispanic	41	27	67.5	10	25.0	3	7.5	1	2.4	
LD										
African American	68	46	67.6	20	29.4	2	2.9	0	0.0	
Caucasian	310	228	73.8	69	22.3	12	3.9	1	0.3	
Hispanic	234	161	70.0	60	26.1	9	3.9	4	1.7	
MR										
African American	32	22	68.8	8	25.0	2	6.2	0	0.0	
Caucasian	90	59	65.6	25	27.8	6	6.7	0	0.0	
Hispanic	68	45	67.2	18	26.9	4	6.0	1	1.5	
OHI										
African American	35	21	61.8	12	35.3	1	2.9	1	2.9	
Caucasian	170	110	64.7	57	33.5	3	1.8	0	0.0	
Hispanic	50	32	64.0	17	34.0	1	2.0	0	0.0	
SI										
African American	27	18	66.7	9	33.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	
Caucasian	204	163	79.9	36	17.6	5	2.5	0	0.0	
Hispanic	98	74	77.1	19	19.8	3	3.1	2	2.0	

Understanding Your Child's IEP.

African American parents indicated the highest level of not understanding their child's IEP in the disability category of OHI at about 14 percentage points (Table 16). Hispanic parents also indicated a high level of not understanding with over 10 percentage points in the disability categories of MR and SI. African American parents indicated 100

percentage points of understanding (completely understand and somewhat understand) their child’s IEP in the disability categories of AU and SI (Table 16).

Table 16

Understanding Your Child’s IEP.

	N Reporting	Completely Understand		Somewhat Understand		Do Not Understand		No Response		
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
AU										
African American	17	14	82.4	3	17.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	
Caucasian	82	65	79.3	15	18.3	2	2.4	0	0.0	
Hispanic	27	23	85.2	3	11.1	1	3.7	0	0.0	
ED										
African American	23	16	69.6	6	26.1	1	4.3	0	0.0	
Caucasian	101	74	74.0	21	21.0	5	5.0	1	1.0	
Hispanic	41	29	70.7	10	24.4	2	4.9	0	0.0	
LD										
African American	68	40	59.7	23	34.3	4	6.0	1	1.5	
Caucasian	310	219	71.1	74	24.0	15	4.9	2	0.6	
Hispanic	234	145	63.6	68	29.8	15	6.6	6	2.6	
MR										
African American	32	20	62.5	9	28.1	3	9.4	0	0.0	
Caucasian	90	69	76.7	19	21.1	2	2.2	0	0.0	
Hispanic	68	45	66.2	16	23.5	7	10.3	0	0.0	
OHI										
African American	35	24	68.6	6	17.1	5	14.3	0	0.0	
Caucasian	170	114	67.1	48	28.2	8	4.7	0	0.0	
Hispanic	50	28	56.0	20	40.0	2	4.0	0	0.0	
SI										
African American	27	17	63.0	10	37.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
Caucasian	204	160	78.8	34	16.7	9	4.4	1	0.5	
Hispanic	98	65	67.7	21	21.9	10	10.4	2	2.0	

Understanding the ARD Meeting.

As revealed in Table 17, Caucasian parents expressed 100 percent understanding (i.e., completely understand and somewhat understand) of their child’s ARD meeting in the disability category of AU. African American parents indicated the highest level of not

understanding in the disability categories of SI and LD with over 7 % of parents not understanding (Table 17).

Table 17

Understanding the ARD Meeting.

	N Reporting	Completely Understand		Somewhat Understand		Do Not Understand		No Response		
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
AU										
African American	17	12	70.6	4	23.5	1	5.9	0	0.0	
Caucasian	82	70	85.4	12	14.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	
Hispanic	27	21	77.8	4	14.8	2	7.4	0	0.0	
ED										
African American	23	18	78.3	4	17.4	1	4.3	0	0.0	
Caucasian	101	87	86.1	10	9.9	4	4.0	0	0.0	
Hispanic	41	33	80.5	6	14.6	2	4.9	0	0.0	
LD										
African American	68	52	76.5	11	16.2	5	7.4	0	0.0	
Caucasian	310	261	84.2	45	14.5	4	1.3	0	0.0	
Hispanic	234	169	73.5	55	23.9	6	2.6	4	1.7	
MR										
African American	32	29	90.6	2	6.2	1	3.1	0	0.0	
Caucasian	90	73	81.1	14	15.6	3	3.3	0	0.0	
Hispanic	68	55	80.9	9	13.2	4	5.9	0	0.0	
OHI										
African American	35	31	88.6	3	8.6	1	2.9	0	0.0	
Caucasian	170	137	81.1	31	18.3	1	0.6	1	0.6	
Hispanic	50	38	76.0	11	22.0	1	2.0	0	0.0	
SI										
African American	27	19	70.4	6	22.2	2	7.4	0	0.0	
Caucasian	204	183	89.7	18	8.8	3	1.5	0	0.0	
Hispanic	98	78	80.4	13	13.4	6	6.2	1	1.0	

Understanding Delivery of Special Education Services in General Education Setting.

How well parents understood the delivery of special education services in the general education setting elicited the highest percentage of parents answering not sure as compared to all other questions that were evaluated for the study as shown in Table 18. African American parents expressed a high level of not understanding how special

education services can be delivered in general education setting in the disability categories of ED, LD, MR, and OHI (Table 18). Hispanic parents indicated the high level of not understanding in the disability categories of MR and AU (Table 18).

Table 18

Understanding of How Special Education Services Can Be Delivered in a General Education Classroom.

	N Reporting	Yes		No		Not Sure		No Response		
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
AU										
African American	17	8	47.1	8	47.1	1	5.9	0	0.0	
Caucasian	82	48	58.5	28	34.1	6	7.3	0	0.0	
Hispanic	27	20	74.1	4	14.8	3	11.1	0	0.0	
ED										
African American	23	14	60.9	6	26.1	3	13.0	0	0.0	
Caucasian	101	64	63.4	27	26.7	10	9.9	0	0.0	
Hispanic	41	28	68.3	10	24.4	3	7.3	0	0.0	
LD										
African American	68	44	64.7	17	25.0	7	10.3	0	0.0	
Caucasian	310	225	72.6	66	21.3	19	6.1	0	0.0	
Hispanic	234	155	67.4	61	26.5	14	6.1	4	1.7	
MR										
African American	32	19	61.3	8	25.8	4	12.9	1	3.1	
Caucasian	90	55	61.1	29	32.2	6	6.7	0	0.0	
Hispanic	68	48	70.6	13	19.1	7	10.3	0	0.0	
OHI										
African American	35	20	57.1	11	31.4	4	11.4	0	0.0	
Caucasian	170	113	66.5	48	28.2	9	5.3	0	0.0	
Hispanic	50	25	51.0	20	40.8	4	8.2	1	2.0	
SI										
African American	27	17	63.0	8	29.6	2	7.4	0	0.0	
Caucasian	204	154	75.5	41	20.1	9	4.4	0	0.0	
Hispanic	98	71	74.0	22	22.9	3	3.1	2	2.0	

FOCUS GROUPS

African American Focus Group

The focus group for African American parents was conducted at an elementary school. Seven parents participated in the focus group. Participants in attendance were from four different schools in a school district in North Central Texas. Three of the schools were elementary schools with the fourth school being a junior high school. Participants came from a variety of backgrounds. There were six mothers and one father in attendance. Three of the participants were parents of children with low incidence disabilities (e.g., two parents of a child with AU and one parent of a child with OHI); the other four parents had children with high incidence disabilities (e.g., two parents had children with LD, one parent had a child with ED, and one parent had a child with MR). One of the participants had a child that had already been dismissed from special education, but that had been in special education for two years. A complete transcription of the focus group may be viewed in Appendix G.

The first query asked of the participants related to the satisfaction of the education that their child was receiving. The participants did not answer this query, but went directly into discussing how satisfied they had been with special education services that their child had or was receiving. One participant was not aware that her child was classified under the special education umbrella. She stated that her child was only receiving services for a reading comprehension problem and did not realize that this was a part of special education.

I didn't actually know my child was quote in special education. When they signed her up it was just for comprehension. I will sit here through it but I didn't know it was just for special education.

The researcher explained that special education covered a variety of disabilities and offered the participant the opportunity to leave the focus group if she felt uncomfortable. The participant continued the conversation by stating that she did not feel uncomfortable and she would stay to participate in the focus group. Another parent also stated that when her child started in special education, she was not aware of the fact that he was in special education. However, she felt that the services that he received helped him to progress so much that he was exited from special education services. This parent felt that part of the reason he had to go into special education was because he was adjusting to a predominantly white school.

Three of the participants were much more satisfied with special education services than they were when their child was in a general education setting. Six of the participants expressed satisfaction with the services their child had received while one participant did not answer the question. Following are three responses to the query:

My son was in regular kindergarten. I had a problem with her. She was kind of scared to come to me about what was going on in the classroom. So he was a little slower than everybody in the classroom. But she showed me pictures and different things between the other kids and what he was doing. And since they moved him and there is only like 12 kids in the classroom, he has shot straight up. Everything, his alphabet, his numbers, he can write his name. Everything. I am very well for the program. Very well.

Child A. is autistic and he has been in a special education program in the school district since he was three. He has been in special education throughout. I just feel blessed to be in this district because they are trailblazing as far as services.

My daughter definitely has improved being in special education and being in the PAS classes. I have definitely, well the problems started in about second or third grade and I did not know the problems was so severe until we come to this district.

Participants were then asked how satisfied they were with the degree of participation in the decisions regarding their child's special education placement. Four of the participants responded by expressing that they were very satisfied with the way the professionals handled them as parents and with their degree of participation in the decision-making process.

Participants were then asked how well they understood the role they played in the evaluation process of their child. One participant who had a child diagnosed with mental retardation within the last year, did not have a full understanding of her role in the evaluation process; however, another individual who had a child in special education for over four years stated that she was fully aware of her role in the evaluation process. The parent with a child who had been diagnosed with mental retardation stated:

Not really because I am just getting started. So we just starting to know. I am just getting to understand of everything that is going on and what they are trying to figure out. And dealing with the speech therapist and this person so I am just starting to learn about it.

The researcher offered examples after only a few of the participants responded to facilitate further discussion. The father/mother couple stated that she was aware of her role in the evaluation process, but didn't always agree with the label the district had given her son. Further, the couple stated that many professionals outside the district had labeled her son autistic, but the district had not. The couple explained they were not satisfied with this aspect of the evaluation process but they were satisfied with the services her son was receiving because they felt that they were the services her son needed regardless of the label the district had given him. The participants (mother and father of the child with autism) also stated that while their child was in a general education setting, the school

had no clue how to handle his disability. The couple was very unhappy with that school in particular, but has been very happy with the special education experiences that they have had in the district.

One participant then began discussing her perception of special education and the fact that she felt the label of special education was just a place that “future convicts or future truants” would be educated. She felt that special education was just a place that “babysat” children, stating:

I know special education is perceived as how I grew up. That is where the future truants were and the future convicts are going to be. So when you said special ed, my interpretation of special education was that they were going to babysit him until he is old enough to go out on the street. So I still have an issue with that.

Another participant also stated he had an issue with the label of special education because when he grew up most of the students in special education fought with him, or ended up in prison or dead.

I have an issue with that. Maybe because I have been stamped by that. I remember those kids. I remember I fought a lot of them, a lot of them ended up at Rickers, a couple of them are dead. So I remember.

Another participant stated that special education labeled many individuals that she knew with a disability and those individuals eventually became doctors or judges.

The researcher then tried to clarify with the participants, if in fact they were dissatisfied with the label of “special education.” One participant, the mother of the autistic child, directed a comment to the mother that didn’t know her child was in special education. She stated to the other mother “I can sense that (uncomfortable with the term) even from the first one that responded.” The mother that was unaware that her child was in special education said she honestly did not know. Not only from other participants, but

also from the researchers point of view, this participant did exhibit behaviors and tone of voice that indicated that she was bothered by the fact that her child was in special education. After the other parents began expressing their views throughout the focus group, she seemed to become more at ease with her original feelings of discomfort. The researcher then attempted to elicit more responses regarding the label of special education which involved asking the participants if the labeled bothered them because of past experiences with students in special education. The mother that did not know her child was in special education felt that the professionals did not properly explain that her child was under the special education umbrella. The father in the group explained while he was growing up in New York, that the kids were basically “bad ass” kids and that all the students were put into a classroom together regardless of their disability.

More or less, yea my association is what I have been exposed to. So I have been exposed to the kids that were basically for the lack of a better term “bad ass” kids. and they put them in that room and everybody saw the kids in that special education class. They’re slow, they’re retards, those kids at the time I don’t think they were able to diagnosis the symptoms that they were having then to where we are today. So they put everybody together because they had different challenges. Before you realize it, the kids that probably didn’t belong in there they had to survive so they had to model to their other people. There were a lot of things that happened in those classes because of a lack of understanding. Even D., a friend of mine named D. They put him in a special education class. He was reading in the 9th grade “the cat will go to the store”. He said what kind of class am I in. But they stuck him in there. I have to be hones with you. It was race based. And this is in Brooklyn and at the end of the day had he not spoken up or raised his hand. A lot of Kids were cruel.

The mother that originally was not aware of her child being in special education made a comment that she felt that how children progressed was dependent upon the parents. She said she would do whatever it takes to help her child succeed and that “you’re not going to label my kid and make her believe she is in this category and she is not capable of

achieving.” She also felt that the generation of her parents were not aware of what they needed to do to “attack the problem.”

The father in the group asked a question relating to whether or not the other participants felt that the difficulties their children had was due to lack of participation by the fathers.

Let me ask a question because I am the only male in here and I know that growing up a lot of males, my father was around so that may have a huge influence on a lot of the kids because most the kids, 95% of them were male. So that plays a major part on as far as engagement or what the kids want to do or the way they want to go. I want to ask now is it that the fathers aren’t involved. I mean I just happened to come tonight because I wasn’t even thinking I was going to be here.

Two of the participants agreed that because of a separation or divorce, they then began to see these difficulties arise with their children and were soon labeled with a disability under special education services.

I agree, number one because my son started last year and I had just moved here and it was a separation. And that is when everything started. It is like, I would try to get his dad to come and he never would come to the school. I mean, I went through a lot, but through it all, Ms. Patton, we overcame. It’s like now he is a straight A student, I have no problems with him. He loves school. And I am so glad I moved here. I was in North Dallas and then I moved here. It is the best thing ever. I mean it is.

I agree with you so much. We moved here from North Carolina and it was due to separation or divorce. I moved the kids twice. During the move you still had straight A students. You still had a child that was coming home doing the best or even a grade higher. But then once I went through the separation and the divorce, that is when the father came up. And then it is like is she just doing this to get to me. Her whole lifestyle has changed, she no longer has a mother and a father. I mean, what is it. I thought she was having a disability at one time.

The researcher then redirected the discussion to the topic of how well the parents understood how decisions are made regarding the placement of their child. The researcher went on to explain the types of placement the child could possibly be in. The

mother of the child that had recently been placed into special education did not have an understanding of this, while another parent that had a child in special education for several years stated that she was “definitely aware of it.” No other participants chose to respond.

The researcher then engaged the group in a discussion as to how well they understood what the Individual Education Plan was. Four of the participants answered “yes” while one participant answered “no”. This was the extent of the answers from the participants. Many just gave a simple “yes” or “no” answer. It seemed at this point that time had become a factor in how detailed their answers were.

The researcher elicited a discussion related to how well they understood what takes place Admission, Review or Dismissal (ARD) meeting. Three participants simply answered “yes”. Finally, the last query related to the parents understanding of how special education services can be delivered in a general education setting. One participant answered “no.” Four participants indicated they understood, while two others stated they did not understand how special education services were delivered in a general education setting. At this point, it seemed that parents were ready to complete the focus group.

Overall, the participants in the African American focus group seemed satisfied with the education their children had and are receiving from special education. There was more dissatisfaction with their learning experiences in the general education setting but this dissatisfaction was only present with parents of children with low incidence disabilities. While the parents did seem to be pleased with the services that their children were receiving or had received from special education services, most all of the participants stated that from their past experiences, the special education term brought on negative

thoughts or feelings. When discussing how well parents understood different aspects of special education services, participants in this focus group expressed that they had a good understanding of many of the aspects of special education. One exception to the understanding was a mother of a child who was new to special education. While she expressed not knowing some of the terms or aspects of special education, she seemed very optimistic about learning more as she had more encounters with special education services.

Caucasian Focus Group

The Caucasian focus group consisted of seven female participants who all had children or grandchildren at one elementary school. Eighteen individuals had been invited to the focus group. Two of the participants were grandmothers with a child who had been diagnosed as having an emotional disturbance. One participant was a step-mother of a child who had been through special education programs since the child's fifth grade year, but had already graduated. Another participant was a mother of a child who had been placed in a self-contained special education class for behavioral issues, but the child had recently been exited from the program and was attending general education classes at a junior high school. The final three participants were mothers of children who currently receive special education services at the elementary level. Four of the participants had children who were or had been in programs for children with emotional disturbances while the other three had children with learning disabilities. Three of the participants were educators in some capacity in the school district which the focus group was held. One of those participants invited herself to the focus group when she learned that it was being held. A complete transcription of the focus group can be examined in Appendix H.

At the outset, participants were asked to discuss their level of satisfaction with general education. Instead, participants responded with how they felt about special education services. Most of the participants seemed to associate progress with special education services rather than general education services. An educator with a grandchild who is in a special education self-contained classroom expressed her thoughts on the difficulty of not being able to speak out when instructional strategies that she knows should be used in the classroom are not evident in her grandchild's education. However, overall she felt her grandchild's progress has been good in special education programs considering his "limitations" which involve behavioral issues as well as a visual disability.

I have some thoughts because I am so involved in the educational system. I am so aware of cutting edge instruction strategies that it is difficult for me to keep my mouth shut when I know it isn't going on in the classroom. On the other hand, I have been very pleased with the progress my child has made because of his limitations. Um, but it is a hard balance and I think it would be regardless of any class that he would be in because of my knowledge and my position in the district.

The educator grandmother did add that she knew that her grandchild was not always a reliable source for letting her know what specific strategies were being used in the classroom. Later in the discussion about satisfaction with special education, she articulated how her grandson was in a crisis situation when he came to the district. She felt that had she not had enough money to bring in opinions of psychiatrists and psychologists, she would not have been able to obtain the most appropriate services for her grandson. She felt that when school personnel disagreed with what she wanted for her grandson, they were not able to "stand up" to what the "mental health professionals" believed was appropriate. Another educator voiced her opinion on the fact that her step-child did not make progress in the general education setting and she also felt it was

difficult not to speak out when she felt appropriate educational strategies were not being used.

A parent of a child with an emotional disturbance expressed her frustration regarding her feelings that her child most likely misbehaves because he is not being challenged enough in his special education class. She did recognize that there is a “fine line” between what he can handle without exhibiting maladaptive behaviors. Later in the conversation, she also stated that at times she is satisfied and other times she is very dissatisfied. This parent also has a first-grade child with a learning disability and she has felt very frustrated with her son being below level in reading and the district not testing him for dyslexia or providing services other than special education. She also expressed dissatisfaction in the way that the principal has handled and misinformed her regarding bringing an advocate to an ARD meeting. The parent stated that she had been told that if she were to bring an advocate to the meeting, the meeting would not be held. She explained that she relies on the educators to inform her on her rights and laws regarding special education and at this point she feels she has been lied to regarding the right to bring an advocate.

A parent of a child with a learning disability stated that she was “mostly satisfied” with her child’s education, but she has been dissatisfied with the type of activities, such as hands-on activities, that have been cut out of curriculum because of the need to meet standards set forth by the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills test. Comparing the experience of her older child’s educational experience, she feels her younger child, who has a learning disability, would benefit from the types of activities that her older was able to participate in while in elementary school.

Another parent of a child with a learning disability and mild orthopedic disabilities stated that this was the first time she had experienced the educational system in the United States because her older child went through the educational system in the United Kingdom. This parent felt that her child has benefited from special education services but that he does have a difficult time getting back into the classroom and “getting caught back up on things” after receiving assistance from content mastery.

The participant who is a paraprofessional in a self-contained behavioral class spoke in regards to her child’s experience in a self-contained special education class. She felt that she has been satisfied with the experience in special education because of the educators who have diligently worked to help him progress so much so that he was able to be released from special education altogether.

All three individuals who worked for the district in some capacity expressed their opinions regarding the benefit of being involved in education and knowing their rights as a parent. They all felt that working in the district provided insight into what rights they have and that parents that do not have this background in education could have a very difficult time understanding the full process of special education. Two parents responses included:

There are things that I wish have been done differently but then again being on the inside I have been able to understand why some things are just not possible because of numbers and it is frustrating when they have to teach to pass a test.

I agree with you so totally. And when my son got to be a sophomore, actually he brought it home to me. It said from then on all ARD’s because he had reached a certain age, he was of legal age to make all his academic choices. If you think I didn’t march straight up there and say, excuse me, he is my child and until he turns 21 and is of legal age, he is not mature enough to make his educational decisions. She said well you do know I do not have to let you know. I told her, you better let me know as a courtesy t a parent that my child is going to ARD because he will not

know how to make his decisions. And I don't expect him to be able to make his decisions at this point. And we went round and round about that two or three times. And had I not been in an educational setting and known that who knows where my child would have gone.

Two of the parents expressed frustration with the district's policy on dyslexia and the difficulty they have had getting their children tested for dyslexia. The parents expressed that the district will not test children for dyslexia until the child is eight years old. One parent stated that the district told her that it is the "dyslexia law" that the child not be tested until they are eight but from the parent's further investigation, she has found this not to be true. She feels that the district plays a political game with parents and this may be because of funding or for some other reasons of which she is not aware.

Regarding the aspect of understanding the evaluation process and how parents have a role in this process, one parent immediately stated that she did not understand her role while an educator asked for clarification. Four participants responded with "no" that they did not understand their role in their child's evaluation process in special education. A parent of a child who has an emotional disturbance answered no and expressed her confusion with the testing for her child's emotional state and how it applied to her child's educational needs. She felt that these were two completely separate entities and when her child was first diagnosed, she did not understand how the two were related. The parent who is a paraprofessional for a self-contained classroom stated that she would not have understood if she would not have had experience from the job. Another educator explained the difficulty that her husband had in understanding issues relating to the ARD meeting. Several participants expressed the difficulty the lay person has with the special education lingo. One participant went on to say that it is "like learning a whole new

culture, it is like a language.” Intimidation was also mentioned as a factor by participants when attending and ARD meetings. A few of the parental responses follow:

I would not have understood, and I don't consider myself, I think I am fairly intelligent, I would have not understood if I didn't know personally people to ask. So I can see how that would be frustrating as a parent coming and facing either with emotional or learning difficulties because I would not have known. I would not have understood.

I am from a different perspective because I am an educator and I am a step-mom and that when I got home my husband would say now why did they say this and what does this mean and why are we doing this.

Ya, it is like learning a whole other culture, it is like learning a language. And ya know and there is not a rule. They give you a rule book but it is still in their culture and language and no one is interpreting it for you.

A lot of it is the wording. For the longest I didn't know what CM was. And we were putting him in CM, it is Content Mastery. And what was Content Mastery. What is it? I have no idea. I didn't have a clue what it was.

Professionals watching the clock and making parents feel hurried was another area of dissatisfaction mentioned by several of the participants.

When asking participants about how well they understand the IEP, several stated they did not understand what it is. Even the educators mentioned that in some meetings they are confused and the special education professionals do not always explain what is going on in the meeting. Participants did go on to say that they felt that this school district was more progressive than other districts in the area. So, while dissatisfaction was expressed on many issues, participants did express some satisfaction with the district.

Rather than discussing whether they understood what takes place at an ARD when asked by the researcher, four of the participants discussed the problems they have encountered when disagreeing at an ARD meeting. One participant stated that when she disagreed she “kind of felt you are up against the Inquisition.” Another participant felt

that when she did not agree with the ARD committee, the process thereafter made her feel she had to eventually agree with the committee. Three of the parental responses follow:

Well going back and this is about the ARD thing and I have had the experience where I have disagreed with something. And God forbid you sign something I disagree, it turns into, it is like a court of law, and everybody, it causes this huge domino effect, and then you start getting phone calls and letters and people talking to you and what is going on. And you are going, I just disagreed with what you said, and I am not changing my mind. And they want to come back in and have another ARD and they want to go through the whole thing. It is like if you disagree with what I said I don't get to come back and change what you are doing but you are going to come at me hammering at me until I change my mind to match your viewpoint and I sign I agree. And I finally did and they weren't listening, and I let it go.

We had a similar situation when we went to Marie Huie because he didn't speak until he was three and they thought he was autistic. And sent him to Marie Huie and they dismissed him when he went to Kindergarten and I disagreed and I thought he should still have speech and they said no and it wasn't until last year until they decided to put him back in speech and that there was a problem there. And he is still in speech.

I have also disagreed at and ARD before and you kind of felt like you were up against the Inquisition. Ya know if you disagree with anything. And it did have a big domino effect but it turned out ok but I feel like it took a long time. But I think it is set up that if you do disagree I think it is just a shame that you are made to feel intimidated.

Regarding the aspect of how well participants understood how special education services can be delivered in a general education setting, participants asked for further explanation. Once explained in more detail, one participant stated that she understood how modifications could be made in the classroom, but does not see how it is currently being done in her child's class. One educator further explained what modifications are, but participants did not comment on this matter, rather they listened to her explanation.

Overall, parents in the Caucasian focus group seemed more dissatisfied with their child's special education services than parents in the other focus groups. The participants stated that they were mostly satisfied, but later in the focus group parents seemed to become more comfortable stating their dissatisfaction. The focus group seemed to give parents a forum to discuss their concerns and dissatisfaction. One parent told the researcher after the focus group that we need to have more focus groups so she can learn more about her rights. The overall understanding of special education services seemed to be low in some areas such as their role in the child's evaluation process and with modifications or how special education services were delivered in the general education setting. Participants chose not to speak about their understanding of the ARD committee meetings and spoke about other aspects of dissatisfaction such as not feeling comfortable enough to disagree with educators. Another area that caused parents to feel dissatisfied was the fact that educators seem to cut the meetings short or watch the clock while in ARD meetings. The focus group allowed parents to express their numerous areas of dissatisfaction.

Hispanic Focus Group

Twenty-one individuals from five different schools were invited for the Hispanic focus group. Six parents attended the focus group with five of the participants being mothers and one participant a father of a child who has or is receiving special education services. Three of the participants had a child who had been released from special education programs. Two of the participants had multiple children who received special education services. Schools that were represented by parents included a total of five different schools with representation from three elementary schools, one junior high

school, and one high school from the same district. The complete transcription of this focus group can be found in Appendix I.

The opening query related to the parent's satisfaction level of general education, of which two parents indicated they were very satisfied.

I am very satisfied with my child's education. I have a child in kindergarten, 2nd grade and 5th grade. I think it is a great school and we are very please with it.

I am very satisfied with the education my children have received. I have 3 children, Ages 15, 10, and 6. The school has been amazingly, I mean the education is just great.

The married couple expressed satisfaction with their two younger children who do not receive special education and dissatisfaction with the general education services of their child who is now in high school. The parents that expressed dissatisfaction stated that they were not happy because they felt since he was released from special education services he was no longer learning.

Translator stated that the parents are pretty much very satisfied with the education that two of her daughters are receiving. One goes to one elementary and one goes to another elementary in Pre-K. But she has a son that is attending a high school in the district and she is not very satisfied.

The satisfaction level of another parent was at a higher level when the child attended elementary school as opposed to when her child attended junior high school. The parents that expressed dissatisfaction had children who were in special education, but then had been released upon entering junior high school and high school. A parent who is also an educator in the district, asked the other dissatisfied parents with a high school age child if they understood the process of their child being released from special education. The parents indicated that they did not understand why the student was being released from special education services.

When participants were asked if they felt satisfied with their child's special education services, three parents indicated that they were satisfied. However, one of these parents stated that she had difficulties understanding what the acronyms meant while she attended the ARD meeting. This parent went on to say that if she had a difficult time understanding with her twenty years of experience as an educator, parents who are Limited English Proficient (LEP) are at a greater disadvantage because of the language barriers that exist when translation occurs at the meeting. A suggestion was made by the educator that translators for special education ARD meetings should have a background in special education and be fluent both in Spanish and English. The moderator continued to probe to obtain additional information. An additional query was posed to determine if there was an intimidation factor at the ARD meetings. Two parents answered yes.

Yes, it is also extremely intimidating because you have 5 or 6 people giving you their titles and you are thinking what is this?

You are thinking the worse. I also translate for the ARD meetings. So if you don't understand what they are saying I have to translate exactly what they are saying at the moment they are saying.

He says that when he feels intimidate and once he gets there and everyone tells him what they have to say he feels like there is nothing much more to say. As he walks in he says it is a said and done thing and it is very intimidating.

The educator went on to say that it is difficult to translate exactly what is being said even though she has been a translator and educator for over fifteen years. A late arrival came in and introduced herself as a parent with two children in special education. She went on to express her satisfaction with the services her children have received in special education.

When asked how satisfied parents are with the degree of participation in the child's placement decision, the father in the group expressed his dissatisfaction with his lack of participation in the placement decision because he found out from his junior high-aged child that he was placed in special education. The wife of the previously mentioned husband explained that she works a difficult schedule and was not notified of when the ARD meeting was going to take place. The only way the husband and wife became aware of the child's placement into special education was when he told them.

Another parent felt dissatisfied with the way the ARD committee handled her child's placement decision. The parent did not feel that she had input in the child's placement because when she came to various ARD meetings, the professionals had the documents "pre-recorded and written and prepared." The father in the group concurred and added that the language barrier made him feel more intimidated to add input. The moderator further probed the father to determine if he felt uncomfortable voicing his opinion in the meeting. The father felt that once he arrived at the meeting, everything had been decided by the professionals and that there was not much more to say. He also felt that intimidation played a role in his comfort level at the meeting. After being asked, the father indicated that he did not understand that he had the right to disagree at the meeting. Two other parents stated that they had been satisfied with their degree of participation at ARD meetings.

When probing the group to determine if they understood why their child is eligible for special education, one parent immediately answered "no", another parent answered "yes", and the educator wanted further clarification. The educator then went on to explain that there are many different factors involved in eligibility and that the question made the

assumption that they all knew what the term eligibility meant. The implication made by the educator was that even though one parent answered “yes”, they may not fully understand what the term eligibility entails. She even went on to question the parent who answered yes to ascertain if she fully understood the question. A parent then digressed back to previous questions stating that she has experienced arriving at an ARD meeting with professionals having the papers already “drawn up.” She stated that she could understand how a parent could feel intimidated even though she has never had those feelings. The group then digressed because the educator continued to query the other parents on whether professionals explained why their child was in special education. She also mentioned that professionals not allowing parents to have sufficient time at meetings is an injustice to the parents.

A conversation in Spanish began to emerge without the opportunity for translation. While one parent expressed satisfaction, the educator parent continued to question whether the parent truly understood the question or the special education process. The digression continued with much effort by the researcher to have it translated but very little translation occurred. After much effort to follow the Spanish conversation, the researcher interrupted the conversation and asked if parents understood their role in the child’s evaluation process. The husband and wife couple answered no and the educator again asked for further clarification. After the researcher offered a more detail explanation of the question, two more parents indicated that they understood the evaluation process with one parent stating that she actually requested the evaluation on her second child.

When answering the researchers query concerning the capacity of understanding relating to how decision on their child's placement were made, only three participants who answered replied with an affirmative response. Regarding the understanding of their child's IEP, three parents answered "no" while two parents answered "yes". Two parents expressed understanding of the ARD meeting while two parents stated they did not understand the purpose. When the researcher asked if parents understood how special education services were being implemented in the general education setting, three originally answered "no" and two answered "yes". After rephrasing the query to explain that the question encompasses modifications made in the classroom, one parent who responded with a "no" then changed her answer to "yes" because she was able to understand the terminology.

The last few query of the focus group elicited less of a response than previously. The educator in the focus group was involved with three of the parents in the focus group previously because she had served as an interpreter at ARD meetings for these parents. By the questioning she asked it was clear that she had a previous experience with the parents. When the focus group conversation seemed to get out of control, the past experience that the educator had with the parent seem to be obvious. Most of the parents in the focus group seemed to be satisfied with special education services while a few seemed to have had a bad experience. Parents also indicated that they were more satisfied with services in special education than general education services. With the Hispanic focus group, it seemed that there were more difficulties for parents understanding their rights and basic ideas associated with special education. Some of the lack of understanding was because of the language barrier but not for most parents in the

group. The husband and wife couple who had a language barrier expressed much dissatisfaction with professionals not including them in the process while the other parent who had a language barrier expressed much satisfaction with her experience with special education professionals. Rather than inferring that the reason for dissatisfaction has to do with a language barrier, it is more obvious to conclude that even parents with no language barrier had difficulty understanding certain components of the special education process.

Conclusion of Focus Groups

Parents were offered pizza and babysitting services while they attended the focus groups. Pizza and dessert was also offered to the children of the parents attending the focus groups. This served as an incentive for attendance. Transportation was also offered for two of the parents that expressed the need but transportation was actually provided for only one parent.

African American parents had the highest participation rate in comparison to the number invited. African American participation rate was 64%, with Caucasian

Table 19. Parental Participation in Focus Groups.

Participants	No. Invited	No. Attended	Percent in Attendance
African American Participants	11	7	64%
Caucasian Participants	18	7	39%
Hispanic Participants	21	6	28%

participation rate being 39%, and Hispanic participation rate being the lowest with 28%. Exact numbers of parents who attended the focus groups as compared to numbers invited can be viewed in Table 19.

Female participation at the focus groups was much greater than the participation of males. One father participated in the African American focus group and one father participated in the Hispanic focus group. No males were in attendance at the Caucasian focus group. Numbers of male and female participants in each focus group can be viewed in Table 20.

Table 20. Male and Female Parental Participation in Focus Groups.

Participants	Total No. in Attendance	Males in Attendance	Females in Attendance	% of Males	% of Females
African American Participants	7	1	6	14%	86%
Caucasian Participants	7	0	7	0%	100%
Hispanic Participants	6	1	5	17%	83%

African American Focus Group Conclusions

African American participants expressed the least areas of dissatisfaction with special education services, however many parents felt uncomfortable with their child being labeled with the term special education. African American participants were not unhappy with the services their child received through special education services, but they were unhappy with their child being labeled under the special education umbrella. Many African American participants explained they associate the term special education with a

negative memory of more severely disabled students or students that exhibited severe behavioral issues. A few of the participants stated that they were unaware that the services their child was or is receiving were part of the special education services. One parent, who had a child who had been recently dismissed from special education, stated that she felt her son had to take a step down by being in special education in order for him to control his behavior and to eventually be released from services. Another parent expressed her dissatisfaction with the label that her child received by stating that even though the school puts a label on her, she will still encourage her child to work hard and do the best that she can. The implication being that the school system may have lower expectations of her child since she has been labeled special education. Yet another parent expressed dissatisfaction with their child not being labeled with the appropriate label even though professionals outside of the district had labeled him autistic. The parent was more dissatisfied with the district's failure to appropriately label her child rather than with the actual services her child was receiving.

With the label of special education being the area of most dissatisfaction, the African American parents were more satisfied than dissatisfied. One parent did disagree with the district's failure to label their child with autism, but stated that he is getting the services he needs which is more important than having the actual label of autism.

As far as African American parents feeling they have a good understanding of special education services, more than any other group, they expressed a strong understanding of special education services. The only parent that indicated that she did not understand terms or aspects of the special education process stated that the understanding was due to the fact that she was still in the learning process because her son had been placed into

special education within the last year. She did not indicate that the lack of understanding was due to the failure of special education professionals to provide her with information but rather with the newness of the terminology and services.

Fewer participants were satisfied with general education services than special education services. Of the parents that answered, most of them understand the various aspects of special education. It is difficult to know if parents did not answer because they did not understand or because they were ready for the focus group to end.

One important aspect of the focus group was a conversation initiated by the father in the group that questioned the relationship between absent fathers and the child's need for special education. The father expressed his opinion on the difficulty that mothers may have when a father is not present in the home. Two divorced mothers agreed that they began to see problems in their children when they went through the separation process.

Caucasian Focus Group Conclusions

While analyzing the Caucasian focus group, it was difficult to ascertain whether the parents were satisfied with special education services. When asking the participants how satisfied they were with general education services, five of the participants indicated satisfaction. However, when they elaborated on the answers, they referred to both special education services as well as general education experiences. Participants originally stated that they were satisfied with their child's education, but as the discussion progressed, it seemed that the focus group became a forum for expressing dissatisfaction with special education services.

The Caucasian focus group was the most difficult groups to get a clear idea of which parents understood certain elements when referring to special education. The Caucasian

participants really did not give as direct of answers on their understanding of special education services as did the African American and Hispanic participants. When queried, parents would tell their “story” about those issues relating to the particular question rather than responding directly. While it was more difficult to establish how well Caucasian parents understood the special education process, the participant’s indirect answers indicated that they do have an understanding of special education. Parents expressed more dissatisfaction in the answers relating to their understanding of special education services rather than if they actually understood the process.

It was very apparent that the educators in the group had a full understanding of the special education process because of their work experience. All three educators expressed how difficult it would be to understand the process had they not had the experience in the field of education. Educators in the group spoke about their husband or other parents feeling overwhelmed with the terminology. Other parents also spoke about the use of acronyms and terminology and how difficult it often is in an ARD meeting to understand and follow the conversation.

Hispanic Focus Group Conclusions

Participants in the Hispanic focus group seemed to be either completely satisfied or completely dissatisfied with their experiences and ideas about the special education process. The sentiment was the same for the understanding of the special education process. Parents felt they either understood matters relating to the special education process or they felt that very little was explained to them about their rights relating to special education. A few of the participants stated that had their own personality not been strong enough, they could see how a meeting could take place with very little

understanding. These individuals stated that if they did not ask numerous questions they would not have a clear picture of the special education process.

Some Hispanic participants expressed the feeling of intimidation at ARD meetings. A few of the parents discussed their dissatisfaction with the way professionals have conducted ARD meetings. They stated that once they arrived at the meeting, all the decisions had been made and all the paperwork had been completed.

Parents indicated that there is great difficulty with understanding the terminology and acronyms that professionals use in an ARD meeting. Participants felt that professionals did not stop to explain what an acronym stood for and with the language barrier, this problem only intensified. The educator in the group stated that the district should provide an individual at the ARD meetings who not only are able to translate to the parents but who also understand special education terminology. The educator felt that translators also need to be fluent in both Spanish and English in order to give Spanish speaking parents the best possible understanding of what their rights are in the ARD meeting.

Another area of dissatisfaction stated by a few of the parents related to when their child was released from special education. Parents felt that their child was released too soon from the special education program and they also indicated they felt they did not have any input in when he was not only released but also when he was placed in special education.

After the researcher posed a query, more detail had to be given by the researcher in order for the parents to understand the question. The researcher had to explain in more detail exactly what the phrase or terminology meant. Once explained, most parents had a

better understanding of what the question was. This difficulty correlates with the difficulty parents stated they had understanding terminology and phrases at the meetings.

Comparisons

Overall, parents in the Caucasian group expressed more areas of dissatisfaction than any of the other two focus groups. Table 21 describes the areas of dissatisfaction of each ethnic group.

Intimidation was a factor that the Hispanic and Caucasian participants felt was an area of dissatisfaction. Participants in both groups indicated that they either had felt intimidated or they could understand how parents could feel intimidated at ARD meetings. The educators that participated in the meetings expressed concern that many parents could feel this intimidation because of the numerous school professionals that attend the meeting.

Parents in the Hispanic and Caucasian group expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of professionals explaining the numerous acronyms and terminology used at the ARD meetings. African American parents did express dissatisfaction in this area, but it related more to professionals not explaining that their children were actually consider special education. All the educators throughout the groups expressed concern with parents having difficulty understanding the special education process. They felt that had they themselves not had the educational background, they would be at a loss for understanding as well. Some stated even with their background, they have had difficulty at times with all the laws relating to special education.

Hispanic and Caucasian participants also indicated dissatisfaction when professionals at the ARD meetings “watched the clock.” Parents felt that professionals did not have

Table 21. Areas of Parental Dissatisfaction Categorized by Ethnic Groups.

Areas of Dissatisfaction for Caucasian Participants	Areas of Dissatisfaction for Hispanic Participants	Areas of Dissatisfaction for Af-Am Participants
Feelings of intimidation at ARD meeting	Feelings of intimidation at ARD meeting	Child being labeled special education
Difficulty understanding acronyms and terminology	Difficulty understanding acronyms and terminology	Labeling criteria for Autism
Professionals watching the clock; hurried meeting	Professionals watching the clock, hurried meeting	Lack of explanation in ARD meetings
Child being released from spec. ed services too soon	Child being released from spec. ed. services too soon	
Difficulty being an educator and having a spec. ed child	Lack of parental notification about ARD's	
Child not challenged enough in special ed.	Language barriers	
Teaching to test instead of to child's individual needs	Decisions before ARD meeting takes place	
Need to hire professionals for results at ARD meetings		
School waits for failure until testing occurs		
Feeling that they were unable to disagree at ARD		
Delay in testing children for dyslexia		
Professionals misinforming parents of spec ed rights		
Difficulty readjusting when going back to mainstream		

adequate time to explain all the terminology, which participants viewed as unfair for the parents. Parents stated that when attending the meeting they are often emotional and view their children as extremely important while educators hurry through the meeting because they have to get back to their classroom or other duties.

Some parents in the Hispanic and Caucasian groups expressed dissatisfaction with their child being released from special education services before they were ready. However, some parents in the Caucasian and African American focus groups expressed satisfaction with when and how their child was being released. The parents who had children released from special education services expressed pride in the fact that their child was released and are now doing well in the general education setting.

Another area that all three groups expressed difficulty with was the terminology used with the questions for the focus groups. When using the basic questions from the questioning probe, many participants asked to have the question rephrased. Once the question was rephrased using more descriptive explanations, participants had a better understanding of the question. This issue of professionals not explaining terms was related to being at the ARD and professionals making the assumption that parents understand the terminology and acronyms.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study utilized data from a state-wide survey conducted by Region IX Education Service Center (ESC) in Wichita Falls, Texas as well as three focus groups. The survey conducted by Region IX ESC in the Spring of 2002 distributed over 30,000 surveys to Spanish and English speaking parents in the state of Texas. Almost 5,000 (16% return rate) surveys were received in time to be included in the final analysis. The surveys were distributed as a method in determining areas of improvement for special education services in the state of Texas.

The researcher also conducted three focus groups as part of this study for parents in a school district in North Central Texas. Three different focus groups were held with three ethnic groups (i.e., African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic). Nine questioning routes, taken from the survey developed by Region IX ESC, served as the stimulus for discussions in each of the three focus groups.

Summary

Data from the Region IX parent survey revealed that Hispanic parents were more satisfied with the education their child was receiving, special education services, and their degree of participation with decisions relating to special education services than the other two ethnic groups that were evaluated as a part of this study. Hispanic parents indicated the lowest level of understanding in the areas of (a) eligibility, (b) placement decisions, and (c) Individual Education Plan (IEP). African American parents reported the lowest level of understanding in (a) Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) meeting and (b) how special education services can be delivered in the general education setting. Similar

levels of understanding were reported by all three ethnic groups in the area of parental role in the child's evaluation process. Hispanic parents indicated the highest level of satisfaction, while reporting less understanding in more categories than any other ethnic group. Caucasian parents indicated a higher level of understanding with a lower level of satisfaction. In the three categories relating to areas of satisfaction, African American and Caucasian parents had similar levels of dissatisfaction in all three areas.

Many significant differences were found when comparing understanding and satisfaction of special education services among ethnic groups. Significant differences existed between Hispanic parents and the other two ethnic groups in all questions except regarding how special education services are delivered in the general education setting. Queries relating to how well parents understood the special education process resulted in significant differences between Hispanic parents and Caucasian parents when addressing understanding eligibility, parental role in the evaluation process, placement decisions, IEP, and ARD meetings. The difference is a result of Caucasian parents having a better understanding of the special education process than Hispanic parents. This difference in understanding is may be due to language barriers. Another significant difference existed among Caucasian parents and Hispanic parents in the degree of satisfaction with parental participation in the special education process and satisfaction of their child's education in general.

Other differences existed between African American and Hispanic parents in the areas of how well parents are satisfied with special education services as well as understanding decisions related to placement in special education. More Hispanic parents reported being

satisfied with special education service than African American parents by a difference of 4%.

Significant differences existed between African American and Caucasian parents in three areas of understanding including eligibility, decisions on placement, and how special education services are delivered in general education. A significant difference was also indicated in the area of being satisfied with their child's education in general.

Research indicates that Caucasian parents have a better understanding of the special education process than other ethnic groups with the least amount of satisfaction. The Hispanic parents indicated the least understanding of the special education process with the highest level of satisfaction. The fact that so many significant differences existed between Caucasian and Hispanic parental responses regarding understanding indicates that there is a major deficit in Hispanic understanding of the special education process.

When disaggregating the data from Region IX among ethnic groups and within disability categories, parents in all three ethnic groups indicated a low level of understanding as to how special education services can be delivered within a general education classroom setting. The only other area which parents did not understand was in regards to the IEP. Approximately 14% of African American parents under the disability category of OHI, reported not understanding the IEP while over 10% of Hispanic parents in the disability category of SI and MR reported not understanding their child's IEP.

The highest level of dissatisfaction among all three ethnic groups regarding the education their child was receiving was in the disability category of OHI. African American parents with children labeled OHI, reported the highest level of overall dissatisfaction with the special education services their child was receiving. Parents with

children labeled SI and LD reported high levels of overall satisfaction with the special education services their child was receiving. African American parents under the disability category of OHI and AU reported the highest percent of overall dissatisfaction with the degree of participation in decisions relating to special education services respectively at approximately 15% and 16%. The highest reported overall dissatisfaction level (i.e., somewhat dissatisfied and very dissatisfied) with Hispanic parents in regards to their degree of participation was in the disability category of AU and ED. Caucasian parents reported the most dissatisfaction with their degree of participation in the disability categories of ED, MR, and AU.

Focus Group

The focus groups conducted revealed many important details that could not be obtained by a survey-type questionnaire that was used by Region IX ESC. While the survey reported similar levels of overall satisfaction by the African American parents and the Caucasian parents, the African American focus group indicated otherwise. African American parents reported being more satisfied than the Caucasian and Hispanic parents. African American parents also indicated a high level of understanding during the focus group and the parent that expressed not understanding certain components felt very optimistic about having the opportunity to learn since she had only been a parent of a special education child for a short period of time. The African American parents indicated the least amount of understanding of how special education services can be delivered in a general education setting which correlated with the findings of the study conducted by Region IX ESC. The only area of concern expressed by the African American parents was the use of the term “special education”. A few parents of children

with high incidence disabilities stated they did not know their child was classified under the special education umbrella. Parent expressed discontent with the term “special education” and that label being placed on their child. One parent seemed much more comfortable with the term of learning disabled rather than special education. Past experiences with the African American parents formed their dissatisfaction with the term of special education because as they described, this was a place for the “bad” kids that would not amount to anything. One parent expressed her feelings regarding the label and stated that even though the school system places the special education label on her child, she will still teach her child to strive for being the best and being successful in life. Even though African American parents expressed dissatisfaction with the term special education, they stated satisfaction with the services their child has or is receiving that is supporting them with their educational endeavors.

Caucasian parents indicated a mixed response regarding the satisfaction levels regarding special education services and the degree of participation in the decision making process of special education services. Caucasian parents did not respond to how satisfied they were with their child’s education but expressed their feelings of how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with special education services. While parents initially stated satisfaction with special education services, all of the parents had at least one area that they spoke of that caused dissatisfaction. In general, Caucasian parents indicated the least satisfaction with special education services of all three ethnic groups.

Six of the seven Caucasian parents answered “no” to the query regarding how well they understand the parent’s role in the evaluation process. These responses were in contrast to what Caucasian parents reported in the statewide survey by Region IX ESC.

Only 2.4% of Caucasian parents indicated not understanding the parental role in the child's special education evaluation process. When the researcher asked Caucasian parents how well they understood the process of which special education services can be delivered in the general education setting, only one parent answered. This parent has been in the educational system for many years and she went on to explain what this meant to the other parents. No other parents responded to this query but they listened and asked questions. The lack of response indicated that the Caucasian parents did not understand the question or how special education services can be delivered in the general education setting which correlates with the study conducted by Region IX ESC.

Hispanic parents were dichotomous in expressing their level of satisfaction with special education services and the degree of participation in making decisions for their child. About half of the parents expressed satisfaction while the other half expressed dissatisfaction. Hispanic parents were also dichotomous in expressing how well they understood the various components of the special education process. The findings of the Hispanic focus group did not correlate with the survey conducted by Region IX ESC. The survey reported that Hispanic parents were the most satisfied in the three areas that were evaluated for the study while the focus group indicated that half of the parents were dissatisfied. Language barriers and work schedules proved to be an area of concern when discussing satisfaction levels as well as levels of understanding.

Acronyms were mentioned by both the Caucasian and Hispanic parents as an area of concern because many times the parents did not understand what the acronyms meant which made it difficult for the parents to keep up with the conversation at the ARD meeting. This problem was intensified with the Hispanic parents that did not speak

Spanish because of the difficulty with translation efforts during an ARD meeting. The Hispanic educator that participated in the focus group stated that there is a great need for individuals to translate for Spanish speaking parents who had a good understanding of the Spanish and English language as well as having an understanding of special education.

Implications

This study has revealed many relevant issues involved in parental understanding and satisfaction in the special education process. The study has also added to the dearth of literature which has compared parental satisfaction and understanding of the special education process among ethnicities.

Throughout the study, African American and Hispanic parents indicated many issues of relevance in their dealings with special education. One important finding that was discussed in the African American focus group involved the negative connotations that African American parents have with the term of “special education”. African American parents felt that the term special education was a negative or degrading term and associated “bad” kids with the term. Another relevant finding in the study involved the satisfaction level of African American parents. While African American parents were uncomfortable with the term of special education, they express satisfaction with the programs and how it has helped their children. The African American parents, as indicated by the focus groups, were the most satisfied parents. African American parents also had the highest percent of participation than the other two ethnic groups in the focus groups.

Hispanic parents offered many meaningful opinions throughout the focus group. One important aspect of the Hispanic parent focus group involved the difficulty of translation

at ARD meetings. Spanish speaking Hispanic parents indicated the difficulty of understanding through the translation process at the ARD meeting. One parent mentioned the lack of fluency that parents either had in Spanish or English. Not only was the language translation process difficult for many parents, but the fact that most translators do not have a background in special education also added to the already difficult situation of translating at ARD meetings. Some of the Hispanic parents also indicated dissatisfaction with the special education process and the schools neglect to involve the parents in admitting and dismissing the student from special education. These parents indicated that the reason for the school not involving them in the meetings was because of their work schedule. These feelings were further supported through the ANOVA and Tukey post hoc tests. Many significant differences between Hispanic parental responses and Caucasian parents were found particularly in the area of understanding. These findings further support the feelings of Hispanic parents throughout the focus group that they do not understand the special education process because of the language barrier that often exists.

Caucasian parents indicated through the survey distributed by Region 9 ESC that they understood the special education process better than African American or Hispanic parents. Overall, Caucasian parents expressed the least amount of satisfaction with the special education process. While the Caucasian parents initially stated that they were satisfied with the special education services their child is receiving, they have many more issues of complaint throughout the focus group. Caucasian parents also indicated the difficulty of expressing another opinion at an ARD or disagreeing with the committee.

Parents felt that disagreeing with the professionals was a complicated and uncomfortable process.

Parents in all three ethnic groups indicated the least understanding in how special education services can be delivered in the general education setting.

Recommendations

To make parents feel more comfortable and satisfied with the special education process, there are many issues that must be resolved with the various ethnic groups. Hispanic parents must be provided with effective translator with a fluency in Spanish and English as well as knowledge of special education processes and terminology. It could be useful for districts to not only provide translators with Spanish-English versions of terminology but to also provide all parents with a list of defined acronyms or terminology. Caucasian parents also indicated difficulty being able to understand the terms and acronyms used in the ARD meeting.

To enable African American parents to become more comfortable with the term special education, it would be beneficial for professionals not to assume that parents understand their child is being placed under the special education umbrella. It would facilitate a more supportive relationship between African American parents and educators if special education were explained to the parents and what special education now involves. African American parents have based their opinions of special education on their past experiences in school which have clearly been negative opinions. Ideally, changing the term of special education would make African American parents feel more comfortable since the special education umbrella has evolved into a much greater program than in past years of dealing with the more severe disabilities.

APPENDIX A

Questions for Focus Groups

1. Are you satisfied with the education your child is receiving? Why or why not?
2. Are you satisfied with the special education services your child is receiving? Why or why not?
3. Are you satisfied with your degree of participation in the decisions regarding your child's special education services and placement? Why or why not?
4. Do you understand why your child is eligible for special education?
5. Do you understand that you have a role in your child's evaluation process?
6. Do you understand how decisions are made regarding your child's placement?
7. Do you understand your child's Individual Education Plan (IEP)?
8. Do you understand what takes place during the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) meeting?
9. Do you understand how special education services can be delivered in a general education classroom?

APPENDIX B-PARENT SURVEY FORM A

7. Have you received information regarding special education services from your school?

Yes No

8. Have you received specific information regarding your child's disability from your school?

Yes No

9. If you answered YES to questions 7 or 8, please rate the usefulness of the information you received regarding the special education program from your school.

Very Useful
 Somewhat Useful
 Information Not Useful

10. If you obtained additional information regarding special education and your child's disability, where did you obtain the information (mark all that apply)?

Library
 Friends
 University
 Community Agency or Resource
 Support or Parent Group
 Internet
 Other (Specify) _____

11. Please rate how you feel about the information you have obtained regarding special education from other sources.

Very Useful
 Somewhat Useful
 Information Not Useful

12. Please mark your response to the following questions.

Do you understand the school's discipline policy?

Yes	No	Not Sure
<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS

Are you aware that if your child is removed from his/her usual classroom (i.e. for disciplinary reasons), special education services must continue to be provided?

<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
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Are you aware that there may be alternative discipline procedures for students receiving special education services?

<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
-------------------------	-------------------------	--------------------------

Do you know what a "BIP" (Behavior Intervention Plan) is?

<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
-------------------------	-------------------------	--------------------------

Did you know that you have the right to review all of your child's educational records?

<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
-------------------------	-------------------------	--------------------------

Do you know that if your child's educational record contains inaccurate or misleading information, you can make a request that the record be corrected?

<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
-------------------------	-------------------------	--------------------------

Are you aware that you can request a planning conference before the ARD meeting?

<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
-------------------------	-------------------------	--------------------------

Are you aware that you can request an ARD meeting at any time to discuss your child's progress?

<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
-------------------------	-------------------------	--------------------------

Are you aware that an ARD meeting must take place before schedules and class assignments (placements) for your child are made?

<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
-------------------------	-------------------------	--------------------------

Do you know that special education services could be provided in settings other than a public school?

<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
-------------------------	-------------------------	--------------------------

Do you know the purpose of transition planning?

<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
-------------------------	-------------------------	--------------------------

Do you know that there are different ways that a student receiving special education services can obtain a high school diploma?

<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
-------------------------	-------------------------	--------------------------

Do you understand that once your child reaches the age of 18, certain educational rights will transfer to him or her?

<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
-------------------------	-------------------------	--------------------------

Do you know why and when seeking legal guardianship of your child is appropriate?

<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
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Are you aware that there is a Texas Education Agency parent information phone line for special education?

<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
-------------------------	-------------------------	--------------------------

Do you know how to file a written complaint to the Texas Education Agency?

<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
-------------------------	-------------------------	--------------------------

Do you know how to formally request a mediation or due process hearing from the Texas Education Agency?

<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
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Are you aware that there are local workshops and training related to special education or disabilities?

<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
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APPENDIX C-PARENT SURVEY FORM B



Parent Survey

Special Education Programs

MARKING INSTRUCTIONS

- Use number 2 pencil only.
- Make dark marks that fill the oval completely.
- Erase cleanly any mark you wish to change.
- Make no stray marks.

Correct Mark

Incorrect Marks



Please darken the ovals corresponding to the code located on the label on the envelope seal strip. This code does NOT identify you. It is only used for analysis purposes.

Label Code Number

1	2	3	4	5
1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9	9

Label Code Number

1	2	0	7	4
1	2	3	4	5
1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9	9

SAMPLE

1. Indicate the highest level of education that you completed.

- Some High School Some College
 High School Graduate College Graduate

2. Do you have any children who currently receive special education services? Yes No

If yes, how many of your children currently receive special education services?

- 1 2 3 More than 3

3. How many years has/have your child/children received special education services?

- 0-2 years 6-8 years
 3-5 years More than 8 years

4. What are the age or ages of your child/children receiving special education services? Mark as many as apply.

- 1-3 years old
 4-6 years old
 7-10 years old
 11-14 years old
 15 or older

5. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following. Mark the best response.

Are you satisfied with:
the education your child is receiving?

Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Very Unsatisfied
1	2	3	4

the special education services your child is receiving?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

your degree of participation in the decisions regarding your child's special education services and placement?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

6. Please indicate how well you understand the following special education processes. Mark the best response.

Do you understand:

why your child is eligible for special education?

Completely Understand	Somewhat Understand	Do not Understand
1	2	3

the special education "referral for services" process?

1	2	3
---	---	---

your child's testing results?

1	2	3
---	---	---

how your child's test results will be used to decide his/her educational plan?

1	2	3
---	---	---

your role as a parent in deciding if your child will receive special education services?

1	2	3
---	---	---

that you have a role in your child's evaluation process?

1	2	3
---	---	---

how decisions are made regarding your child's placement?

1	2	3
---	---	---

your child's Individual Education Plan (IEP)?

1	2	3
---	---	---

what takes place during the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) meeting?

1	2	3
---	---	---

the explanations provided to you during the ARD meeting?

1	2	3
---	---	---

how often your child will be re-evaluated?

1	2	3
---	---	---

how special education services can be delivered in a general education classroom?

1	2	3
---	---	---

that there is a wide-range of options for providing special education services for your child?

1	2	3
---	---	---

7. Have you received information regarding special education services from your school?

- Yes No

8. Have you received specific information regarding your child's disability from your school?

- Yes No

9. If you answered YES to questions 7 or 8, please rate the usefulness of the information you received regarding the special education program from your school.

- Very Useful
 Somewhat Useful
 Information Not Useful

10. If you obtained additional information regarding special education and your child's disability, where did you obtain the information (mark all that apply)?

- Library
 Friends
 University
 Community Agency or Resource
 Support or Parent Group
 Internet
 Other (Specify) _____

11. Please rate how you feel about the information you have obtained regarding special education from other sources.

- Very Useful
 Somewhat Useful
 Information Not Useful

12. Please mark your response to the following questions.

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Do you know what the role of the ARD (Admission, Review, and Dismissal) committee is?	<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
Are you aware that there may be alternative discipline procedures for students receiving special education services?	<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
Are you aware that if your child is removed from his/her regular classroom (i.e. for disciplinary reasons), special education services must continue to be provided?	<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
Do you feel that the ARD/IEP committee values your input/contributions about your child?	<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
Did you receive an explanation and/or training to help you understand your child's IEP?	<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
Do you know that if needed, a special education student may receive related services such as assistive technology or occupational therapy, etc.?	<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
Do you understand that the ARD committee must begin with the general education curriculum when developing your child's IEP?	<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
Do you know that all final decisions regarding your child's educational program are made during the ARD, and not prior to the meeting?	<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
Are you aware that ARD meetings should be scheduled at a mutually agreed time and place by both parents and school staff?	<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
Are you aware that you can request an ARD meeting at any time you feel it is necessary to discuss your child's progress, goals and objectives and/or services?	<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
Are you aware that an ARD meeting must take place before schedules and class assignments (placements) for your child are made?	<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
Do you think modifications and other requirements of your child's IEP are being implemented in his/her general or special education classes?	<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS
Are you aware that you may contact the Education Service Center in your region to assist you in understanding the special education process?	<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NS

APPENDIX D PARENT LETTER ENGLISH VERSION

Dear Parent(s),

I am conducting a study about parent satisfaction and understanding about the special education process. I will be comparing the satisfaction and understanding among three ethnic groups (i.e., African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic). I will have one focus group for each ethnic group. The focus group will have four to ten parents answering questions about how satisfied they have been with special education and how well they have understood the special education process.

I would like for you to participate in the focus group that best describes your ethnic group. Each participant will be assigned a number and the researcher will refer to each parent as a number, both during the focus group and in the study. I will be asking about ten questions about your satisfaction and understanding about the special education process. You are not required to answer all questions, just the ones you want to answer. The focus group will last about one hour. All participants of the focus groups will be parents of special education students of various disabilities. Although names will not be used, others in the group will know that you are the parent of a special education student.

The dates for the focus groups are as follows:

African American parent focus group March 10, 2005 6:30 p.m. Kent Elementary

Caucasian parent focus group March 8, 2005 6:30 p.m. Kent Elementary

Hispanic parent focus group March 15, 2005 6:30 p.m. Kent Elementary

If you are able to participate, dinner will be provided and childcare if needed. Please feel free to contact me with questions. Let me know if you will be coming to the focus group so I can plan accordingly. My number is 469-233-2882 and my e-mail address is angelapatton@earthlink.net

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). If there are any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the UNT IRB at (940)565-3940.

Thank you.
Angela Patton

APPENDIX E-PARENT LETTER SPANISH VERSION

Estimados padres:

Yo estoy conduciendo un estudio sobre la satisfacción y el entendimiento de los padres sobre el proceso de la Educación Especial. Yo estaré comparando la satisfacción y el entendimiento de los padres de tres grupos étnicos (Afro Americanos, Americanos Blancos e Hispanos). Yo tendré un grupo de personas para cada grupo étnico. Cada grupo tendrá de cuatro a diez personas contestando preguntas sobre que tan satisfechos han estado con el programa de Educación Especial y que tanto han entendido el procesos del programa.

Me gustaría que participaran en el grupo que mejor describe su grupo étnico. Cada participante será asignado un número y el investigador se referirá a cada padre usando ese número. Ese número será usado en los grupos y en el estudio. Yo estaré preguntando aproximadamente diez preguntas sobre su satisfacción y su entendimiento sobre el proceso del programa de Educación Especial. Ustedes no están obligados a contestar todas las preguntas, solamente las que usted le gustaría contestar. El grupo será conducido por aproximadamente una hora. Todos los participantes del grupo serán padres de niños con distintas inhabilidades que están en el programa de Educación Especial. Aunque su nombre no será usado, los otros participantes sabrán que son padres de un niño/a en el programa de Educación Especial.

Las fechas para los grupos serán las siguientes:

Grupo para padres **Afro Americanos-10 de marzo a las 6:30pm. –Kent Elementary**

Grupo para padres **Americanos Blancos-8 de marzo a las 6:30-Kent Elementary**

Grupo para padres **Hispanos- 15 de marzo a las 6:30-Kent Elementary**

Si usted puede participar, habrá cena y habrá cuidado para los niños si lo necesita. Si tiene alguna pregunta por favor no deje de llamarme. Por favor déjeme saber si podrá participar para yo poder planear de acuerdo cuantas personas van a participar. Mi teléfono es 469-233-2882 y mi correo electrónico es angelapatton@earthlink.net

Este estudio ha sido repasado y aprobado por el Comité examinador Institucional de UNT (University of North Texas). Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre sus derechos por ser un sujeto de un estudio, puede llamar a UNT al 940-565-3940.

Muchas Gracias

Angela Patton

APPENDIX F-RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Subject Name _____ **Date** _____

Title of Study

Parental Understanding and Satisfaction of Special Education Services

Principal Investigator Angela Patton

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose and benefits of the study and how it will be conducted.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to look at the differences between three ethnicities (for example: African-American, Caucasian, and Hispanic) on how well they understand special education and on their satisfaction of special education. The study will also look at differences of a parents understanding and satisfaction of special education between disabilities (for example: mental retardation, speech impairments, learning disabilities, and other disabilities).

Description of the Study

Region 9 Educational Service Center completed a statewide parent survey that asked many questions about the parent's experience in special education. The questions about a parent's understanding and satisfaction will be used for this study.

Three focus groups (small groups of parents that sit around a table and answer questions that they want to answer) will be organized. One focus group will be for African American parents, one will be for Caucasian parents, and one will be for Hispanic parents. The parents in the focus groups can be a parent of a child with any type of disability as long as the child has been in special education for at least one year. Some of the questions asked in the focus group are about how satisfied parents are in

different areas of special education. Other questions will be about how well parents understand the different parts of the special education process.

Procedures to be used

The focus groups will be recorded so that the exact wording can be reviewed and typed so that the researcher can look at what was said and compare that to the other focus groups. The answers given by the participants will be reviewed to determine if they are identical, similar, related, or unrelated. After comparing the answers given by the parents, patterns will be developed and used for the dissertation. Any patterns that are found will be compared to literature that other educators have written on the topic of parental satisfaction and understanding of the special education process.

Description of the foreseeable risks

There are no foreseeable risks involved in parents participating in a focus group.

Benefits to the subjects or others

This study can help to determine if there are any differences among ethnicities in parental understanding of special education procedures and the overall satisfaction of special education services. What the researcher learns from this study may help educators become aware of problems in the special education process that may be present with different ethnic groups within different disability categories. If educators are aware of problems that different ethnic groups have, then they are better able to solve the problems.

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records

Review for the Protection of Participants

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940)565-3940 or sbourns@unt.edu with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

Research Subject’s Rights

I have read or have read to me all of the above.

_____ has explained the study to me and answered all of my questions. I have been told the risk and/or discomforts as well as the possible benefits of the study.

I understand that I do not have to take part in this study and my refusal to participate or my decision to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop my participation at any time.

In case I have any questions about the study, I have been told I can contact Angela Patton at telephone number 469-233-2882 or e-mail her at angelapatton@earthlink.net . Lyndal Bullock can also be contacted (University of North Texas-Special Education) at 940-565-2937 or through e-mail at bullock@unt.edu .

I understand my rights as research subject and I voluntarily consent to participate in this study. I understand what the study is about, how the study is conducted, and why it is being performed. I have been told I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

Signature of Subject

Date

For the Investigator or Designee:

I certify that I have reviewed the contents of this form with the subject signing above. I have explained the known benefits and risks of the research. It is my opinion that the subject understood the explanation.

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

APPENDIX G-AFRICAN AMERICAN FOCUS GROUP TRANSCRIPTION

African-American Focus Group
Kent Elementary
March 10, 2005 at 6:30 p.m.

In attendance:

#1 Mother of a second grade child who had been a part of special education for approximately one year and a half. He was in special education for Other Health Impaired and received services from Content Mastery and the Behavior Resource Specialist.

#2 Mother of a student who receives special education services from a school in the south part of the district of Carrollton-Farmers Branch Independent School District. Her son receives services in a Support Center.

#3 Mother of a 5th grade student who receives special education services at Kent Elementary in Carrollton-Farmers Branch Independent School District. She receives services in Content Mastery and has a Learning Disability.

#4 Father of a special education student who receives services in a PAS class setting for students who are emotionally disturbed. The student does not have the label of emotionally disturbed but does have the label of mental retardation. The student receives services in the south part of the district at Montgomery Elementary. Other professionals outside of the district have labeled the child under the autism umbrella.

#5 Mother of the above mentioned child (#4) and wife of #4.

#6 Mother of a student who receives services from a PAS class setting at the junior high school level. The student also received services in elementary school. Blalack is the junior high of which the student currently receives services.

#7 Mother of a student in special education who receives services for a learning disability at Kent Elementary. The student receives services in Content Mastery, Resource Class and from the Behavior Specialist at Kent Elementary.

Moderator: The first question is about the satisfaction of the education your child is receiving. Just the education, the next question will be about special education, so I just want to know if you are satisfied, or how satisfied you are with the education your child is receiving and why or why not?

#4 Is everyone in here, there child is in special education?

Moderator: Her child has been released from special education but everyone else has a child in special education (#1). He was in it for a year or two?

#1 A year

#4 So that is a yes, everyone has a child in special education?

Moderator: Yes, everyone has a child, or is in special education. But in general education, not necessarily special education, but overall education.

Moderator: So anybody want to start that off.

#3 I didn't actually know my child was quote in special ed. When they signed her up it was just for comprehension. I will sit here through it but I didn't know it was just for special ed.

Moderator: Uh huh, it is, it is actually covers a broad umbrella, special education actually covers a broad umbrella now. Anywhere from very minimal speech needs all the way to severe mental retardation. All kinds of things. I am actually the behavior specialist so I deal with all kinds of things. And many kids now have learning disabilities it is very common so it almost not stigmatizing. But special education is kind of a strong word to use but it is that extra help that the kids get and a lot of them have it. So she is under that special education umbrella but if you want to answer some questions you can but if you feel uncomfortable you can go. Whatever you choose to do.

#3 No I feel comfortable

Moderator: So about education in general.

#7 My child is doing well in special education. Before he was in special education he was not getting good grades. Now he is getting 95's and 100's so it is good.

Moderator: So you are basically satisfied with his education.

#7 Yes.

#1 When J. was first started in the program last year, I did not know it was special education either. He had a hard time adjusting to a predominantly white school. And far as him focusing and paying attention to what the teachers was saying, it really helped him one on one. You know how you used to have him one on one.

Moderator: Yes.

#1 Other than that it has helped him a whole lot now. He has progressed, he is out, he loves it. I mean he loves school now. It helped him. It really did. It is like he had to take a step down and go slower to ya know to realize where he was going. Ya know. Overall, I thought it was a good program for him.

Moderator: Anybody else?

#2 Can we speak about special education.

Moderator: Yes, we can speak about special education or regular education. Whatever you want to speak about.

#2 My son was in regular kindergarten. I had a problem with her. She was kind of scared to come to me about what was going on in the classroom. So he was a little slower than everybody else in the classroom. But she showed me pictures and different things between the other kids and what he was doing. And since they had moved and there is only like 12 kids in the classroom, he has shot straight up. Everything, his alphabet, his numbers, he can write his name. Everything, I am very well for the program. Very well.

#5 I can only speak from a special ed point of view because you know you have had A. A is autistic and he has been in a special ed program in the school district since he was three. He has been in special ed throughout. I just feel very blessed to be in CFBISD district because they are trailblazing as far as services. And just that plethora of services of special ed and the whole nine because he is autistic and of course oddly enough he is autistic but he is not listed under CFB autistic because their autism team did not feel he meet the chronic criteria. But you know autism is an umbrella. As far as cognitive skills he is writing and reading and socializing. He likes to socialize with adults more than he does peers. But we have been in several programs from the PPCD program and now he is in the PAS class. We have been pleased.

#6 My daughter definitely has improved being in special education and being in the PAS classes. I have definitely, well the problems started in about second or third grade and I did now the problems was so severe until we come to Carrollton Farmers Branch School District.

Moderator: Where did you come from? What school district?

#6 Dallas. I mean I knew it was serious, but I didn't know it was that serious. We was at Davis and they didn't have PAS classes and I knew then that we had to get to a school that offered the PAS classes to help her with her behavior. And I must say it was a struggle. It was a very hard struggle cause I didn't know. And now that I have the knowledge of her behavior and the behavior of other students like her it definitely has enlightened me on the situation that other students and parents go through. So I am definitely impressed with the services they offer.

Moderator: The next question is are you satisfied with the degree of participation in the decisions regarding your child's special education placement. Services and placements? Why or why not?

#6 Satisfied with the what?

**Moderator: The placement the decision of placement? With your degree of participation?
How involved you were in deciding services?**

#5 I can speak for 4 and 5. what is he?

Moderator: He is 5.

#5 We pretty much as parents we demand it but we have never had to strong arm in this district at all. I think they have known as like I said since he was 3 as very involved parents. We have always been in on the decision making process.

#2 I agree with her. They came to me and we all sat down. We had a discussion. They evaluated him. I knew everything that was going on as it was happening. When it was over they called me in and we all sat down and it was, I agree. I love the way they handled it in Carrollton Farmers Branch.

#6 It is the same for me. It is just overwhelming the response, the teachers, the counselors, everybody go out of their way, the diagnosticians, (that is a word I can't ever pronounce). They just really got to it and took care of the matter. I am very satisfied.

#7 I think they were very very professional with the way it was handled. With the way they treat the parents and the child. So I am very satisfied.

Moderator: Anybody else?

Moderator: Do you understand the role you have in your child's evaluation process? The testing, how they are evaluated, the evaluation of the disability. Do you understand your role in that.

#2 Not really because I am just getting started. So we just starting to know. I am just getting to understand of everything that is going on and what they are trying to figure out. And dealing with the speech therapist and this person so I am just starting to learn about it.

#6 Yes I am fully aware of it as well.

Moderator: The evaluation, and in your case the psychological and testing, the whole testing.

#6 Yes

#5 For number 4 and 5

#4 I can speak for myself C.

#5 For #5 at least I am aware of it and we didn't always agree and we still don't agree but I knew enough to make sure the services that he needed because we had to cut through political tape to get him the services that he required. They still do not have him listed as

autistic because he wasn't severe enough in their recollection and some how they get to go against a medical doctor in the field and psychologist in the field.

#4 Several doctors.

#5 And a pediatric neurologist in the field all with over 15 years of experience in Dallas They all say he is autistic.

Moderator: So you are not really satisfied with the eligibility component.

#5 No I, well he still gets everything that we fought for him to get that he needs as an autistic child, he still got it.

Moderator: Just not the label.

#5 But not the label. He is not severe enough.

But we should know better watching NBC and ABC and all the programs going on in the last month. That you could still have a severely autistic child at 14 that still only has 200 words in his vocabulary, and you could have another child that is now so indistinguishable that you didn't even know they had autism. But the school district and some are worse than others, but still in Carrollton Farmers Branch, if your child is not severe enough in certain areas then I don't think that they do look, they are looking for the worse.

#7 Even though the school district is offering a program I think it depends on the school. I had my kids at different schools in the district and I have always had my kids in the district and so far this one has been the best one (Kent Elementary).

Moderator: What other schools have you been in to the district?

#7 Las Colinas, Davis and Sheffield.

#5 We have been at McCoy PPCD, McLaughlin PPCD, here (Kent Elementary) and now that there is a PAS class at the south part of the district, he is now at Montgomery. But the school that we had the most difficulty with was at Janie Stark where they tried to mainstream him. Even though they already knew him since he was three, they still tried to mainstream him with 25 kids.

#4 That school should be categorized as a DISD school. The staff was truly insensitive to the needs that my child had. And they just didn't get it.

#5 When you are sending home In School Suspension slips because the child, he has been in a program since he was three. So he knows what it is like to be in a class, he knows what it is to ride the bus independently, these are jewels that he has of independence and he knew that something was different here. After the second day of school he was telling me that he doesn't want to go back that there is too many people. And he is fighting me

to get out of the car because he doesn't want to go. He is hiding under the table but you consider that a disruption and you are sending him to the office. Then you have no clue.

#4 They have no clue, even after you give them the records they have no clue.

#2 They didn't want to have no clue.

#4 They just see what they want to see. They don't see what is behind. A lot of times you can see the normality of the child from the front but you can not see the internal issues. You just see what they display and at the end of the day you just go with what you know. So there was a lack of ignorance, there was much ignorance at that school. From the very top down to the people that were day to day.

#7 Back to that question. We are here because I realized that some places know more. I had no idea what some of the problem is until I came here.

#4 I know special ed is perceived as how I grew up. That is where the future truants were and the future convicts are going to be. So when you said special ed, my interpretation of special education was that they were going to babysit him until he is old enough to go out on the street. So I still have an issue with that.

Moderator: With the label of special education?

#4 I have an issue with that. Maybe because I have been stamped by that. I remember those kids. I remember I fought a lot of them, a lot of the ended up at Rickers, a couple of them are dead. So I remember.

#3 Because it was where they thought this kid should be. That kid his whole school years he was labeled as special ed or the problem kid or this child would not end up to be making it. Because I was not considered special ed but I had colleagues that I went to school with, judges, doctors, like you said that special ed.

Moderator: So the term bothers just about all of you. Does the term bother you?

#5 I can sense that even from the one that first responded (#3).

#3 Really, honestly, I didn't know.

#5 That doesn't mean that you are closed minded but that shows you the stamp of that label that has had an impact.

Moderator: From the past, so you think the label bothers you because of your past experiences with that label.

#3 I think if they would have explained it perhaps I didn't interpret it correctly. I was told that my child was in CM for comprehension reasons and basically that was it. Because she needed to be read to orally and that was it. But by no means did they say she was special ed or under the same umbrella.

Moderator: It is all under the same umbrella.

#3 Well that is new to me. I deal with kids everyday. Students

Moderator: What do you do for a living?

#3 I work at NCTC (community college) and still didn't know that it was under the same umbrella.

Moderator: Special ed covers a lot. Do you think that label is because of your past experience? Like you said number 4 what you remember special ed student as, does that label bother you because of that experience that you had?

#4 More or less, yea my association is what I have been exposed to. So I have been exposed to the kids that were basically for the lack of a better term "bad ass" kids. And they put them in that room and everybody saw the kids in that special ed class. Their slow, their retards, those kids at the time I don't think they were able to diagnosis the symptoms that they were having then to where we are today. So they put everybody together because they had different challenges. Before you realize it, the kids that probably didn't belong in there they had to survive so they had to model to their other people. There were a lot of things that happened in those classes because of a lack of understanding. Even D., a friend of mine named D. They put him in a special ed class. He was reading in the 9th grade, "the cat will go to the store." He said what kind of class am I in. But they stuck him in there. I have to be honest with you. It was raced based. And this is in Brooklyn and at the end of the day had he not spoken up or raised his hand. A lot of kids were cruel.

#3 Don't you think that it goes back to the parents. It takes a parent to involve the children to care. To want your kids to go further than we had. That is why we struggle or why I struggle as a parent. And no matter what it takes, I mean no matter what it takes I am going to do for my child. I mean if it means sure she is in special ed, so what. I mean that is your terminology not ours. But I am going to push my child even further not only to prove to her but to prove to you. Your not going to label my kid and make her believe she is in this category and she is not capable of doing achieving. So I think back then and perhaps our parents didn't know better or we didn't know how to attack the problem.

Moderator: As African Americans.

#3 As African Americans

#4 Let me ask a question because I am the only male in here and I know that growing up a lot of males, my father was around so that may have a huge influence on a lot of the kids because most of the kids, 95% of them were male. So that plays a major part on as far as engagement or what the kids want to do or the way they want to go. I want to ask now is it that the fathers aren't involved. I mean I just happened to come tonight because I wasn't even thinking I was going to be here.

#1 I agree, #1 because my son started last year and I had just moved to Carrollton and it was a separation. And that is when everything started. It is like, I would try to get his dad to come and he never would come to the school. I mean, I went through a lot, but through it all, Ms. Patton, we overcame. It's like now he is a straight A student, I have no problems with him. He loves school, he loves this school. And I am so glad I moved here. I was in North Dallas and then I moved here. It is the best thing ever. I mean it is.

#3 I agree with you so much. We moved here from North Carolina and it was due to separation or divorce. I moved the kids twice. During the move you still had straight A students. You still had a child that was coming home doing the best or even a grade higher. But then once I went through the separation and the divorce, that is when the father came up. And then it is like is she just doing this to get to me. Her whole lifestyle has changed, she no longer has a mother and a father. I mean, what is it. I thought she was having a disability at one time. I didn't know what to think because I had her going to Scores, the learning center. You always try to keep your kid up, or doing the best for your kid. What you think is the best. And there she was doing 5th grade level. Came here at third grade and she was on honor roll. She got to fourth grade and it's like she couldn't even do third grade work. And that is when all that came about. I was confused. I mean I went to doctors, I went to therapists. I took her here there everywhere. Until I got to core of it. I even had her tested to see if there was a problem that had not been detected. But again to get back to you, that is when all my problems started is when the divorce. And if there was something there before it was not detected. I don't know if it was something lacking in the schools or not. But you had a child that was doing so well.

#4 How many of the students are male, you have a daughter?

#3 Daughter

#1 Son, and he is not in it anymore.

#6 Daughter

#7 Son

#2 Son

#4 Wow, that is usually more male. I am surprised to see so many females.

#5 Well ours is not that we, well we are married. A. is our son. His situation causes strife of course. When you have a special needs child and especially when you are looking at autism and while we are cautiously optimistic, well we are optimistic, we are very optimistic with this problem but still at the end of the day the data says that only 50% of them will be distinguishable and out on their own. And our biggest fear is what happens after we die. How will he survive, how will he cope. So while we don't really know what causes autism, he has two parents in the home. We are trying our best to do what we can do for him. I can tell you it was a struggle when you said about our parents and when coming from our backgrounds and he was not able to talk and he was acting out and tantrums and the whole nine. They went back to you need to spank his butt. That is the first thing they say, you are disciplining him. When they tested him and said it was autism, I cried in relief that finally, his family and my family would get off of our backs because I knew that were something wrong with my kid. I knew there was something wrong and it had nothing to do with discipline.

Moderator: Lets go on to the next question. Do you understand how decisions are made regarding your child's placement. Where they go if it is the PAS class, regular ed.. Do you have an understanding on how these decisions are made?

#2 I don't at all.

Moderator: You don't?

#6 I definitely aware of it. I understand the problems that we have. I definitely understand it.

Moderator: What about their IEP plan? Their individual education plan, do you guys understand what that is?

#3 Yes

#2 No

Moderator: You are from McLaughlin, is that right?

#6 Yes

Moderator: Do you understand what that is number 7?

#7 Yes

#5 A started in the PPCD program and he was already in the system so I understand it.

Moderator: Do you understand what takes place in the ARD meeting? Admission, Review and Dismissal?

#6 Yes

#1 Yes

#7 Yes

Moderator: The last question is Do you understand how special ed services can be delivered in a general ed classroom?

#4 No

#5 Can you ask that again?

Moderator: Do you understand how special ed services can be delivered in a general ed classroom?

#2 No

#6 Yes

#5 Yes, they attempted that for A.

#2 I don't even see how they attempted it all. That is why I don't understand it.

Moderator: To #3, Did you understand how her services would be, special ed services would be applied in the general ed setting. Because she is especially in the general ed setting.

#3 Yes

Moderator: And what about you, we are talking about modification here.

#1 Yes

APPENDIX H-CAUCASIAN FOCUS GROUP TRANSCRIPTION

Caucasian Focus Group
Kent Elementary
March 8, 2005 6:30 pm

Parent Participants:

#1 Mother of a junior high school boy who had just been exited from the special education program. The child had been labeled Emotionally Disturbed and placed in a self-contained setting for the past three years.

#2 Step-mother of a son that has graduated from the public education system approximately three years ago. Her son received special education services since he was in 5th grade and until he graduated for a learning disability. Participant is also an educator at the elementary level. Participant invited herself when she saw the letters to other parents in the school. She felt she had important information to contribute to the research.

#3 Mother of a fifth grade son who receives services for a learning disability, speech, behavioral services, and occupational therapy. He has received services since he was of preschool age.

#4 Grandmother of a child who currently receives special education services for a learning disability and is also labeled emotionally disturbed. The grandchild receives services through resource and from the behavior specialist. This participant also had a daughter who is the mother of the current child in special education and who is now in her thirties. She also had similar disabilities as the current child in special education.

#5 Mother of two sons who both receive services from special education. The oldest son who is in third grade is labeled emotionally disturbed and receives services through a self-contained classroom and from the behavior specialist. The youngest son who is in 1st grade receives services from the behavior specialist and from content mastery. He is labeled with a learning disability.

#6 Grandmother of a child who is labeled with an emotional disturbance and who also has a visual disability. The child is served in a self-contained classroom for students with emotional issues. He also receives services from the behavior specialist and visual specialist. Grandmother has been an educator for over 20 years.

#7 Mother of an adopted child who has recently been identified special education. The girl is a second grade student who has a learning disability and receives services through resource.

Moderator: You have the read the purpose of my study. It is for my dissertation and I am basically looking at parental satisfaction and understanding across ethnic groups. So this is my Caucasian group. I am going to start with some questions and you can identify yourself with numbers. Who ever feels comfortable answering the

questions can. You don't have to answer a question, whatever you feel comfortable answering. I have ten questions and the first one is are you satisfied with the education your child is receiving. Why or why not. Just education in general. The next question will be regarding special education. So this is just about the education your child is receiving.

#2 So receiving at this time?

Moderator: Receiving or have received yes.

#2 We are talking about general education.

Moderator: Yes.

#6 I have some thoughts because I am so involved in the educational system. I am so aware of cutting edge instructional strategies that it is difficult for me to keep my mouth shut when I know isn't going on in the classroom. On the other hand I have been very pleased with the progress my child has made because of his limitations. Um, but it is a hard balance and I think it would be regardless of any class that he would be in because of my knowledge and my position in the district.

#2 I am speaking as a parent that already has had one graduate and he went through special ed. So as far as his general education, he was mainstreamed in high school and did very well in the regular elected classes. I am kind of like number 6 in being in education I knew where he should have been and what he should have been doing. So um it was very hard for me to keep my mouth shut. And a lot of times I didn't do very well on that. I just knew where I wanted him to be. And uh at least he graduated.

#6 The other thing is that I don't know how reliable my child is in what he tells. And over the course of time if I said are you doing calendar math and he says no we don't do

calendar math. And I know everyone in the district is suppose to do it. Is he really telling me the truth, is it that they haven't done it in a couple of days, is it that they haven't started it yet. So my source of information is not necessarily reliable and you can't go over to the teacher and say are you doing calendar math, or are you doing this, or are you doing that.

#5 I get frustrated with my child because I think in some instances he is not being challenged enough and that he is bored. And when he is bored he seeks out trouble. And uh in other cases I think that when he is being challenged it turns into a stressor for him. And he can't handle it. So there is a very fine line about what education is doing for him. I would like to see him do more but can he handle more.

Moderator: Anybody else.

#7 I guess I am mostly satisfied but the part that I am not as satisfied with is the amount of things they have had to cut out because of the TAKS test and curriculum requirements. Which I think some of the things the way to learn it, especially for a special ed kid, even better because they used to do read around the world. They used to do things that were more involved it was more of an activity where you would learn about a country or by bringing things. Ya know that type of thing. They have cut out a lot of that and I think that is a shame.

#2 I know that is frustrating.

#7 And it made it fun.

#6 I think that is a problem that we are all facing whether it is in the special education class or regular class is that good teaching practices are being sacrificed for good test results or for what we think will get us good test results.

#2 I agree with that.

#5 In some cases, well I have some friends that are home schooling. And there day and the amount of material they cover is so much more and more intensive than what they are doing in public education. And they do it in a shorter amount of time. They are having four hour days or five hour days. And um so I wonder sometimes are we wasting time at school.

#3 This is my first experience with schooling over here. The schooling over in the UK is totally different. But my son is doing really well. I think the only problem is that when he goes out to special ed, getting back in the classroom and getting caught back up on things he has missed out on.

#2 And that is very difficult.

#1 I am number one and I have one that has been in special ed and has recently been dismissed from special ed. There are things that I wish have been done differently but then again being on the inside I have been able to understand why some things are just not possible because of numbers and it is frustrating when they have to teach to pass a test. Rather than teach the child to do whatever your goal is for that teaching, it is getting them to memorize material to get them to pass a test than really teach them how to learn. Um, but on the whole I have been very satisfied because it is due to the people that have worked with him so faithfully and so hard that have enabled him with his challenges and overcome the problems and get out of the special ed classroom and into the regular education classroom full time and not be sinking. So I think some of these programs that he has been in, he couldn't have done it without it. So on the whole I have been satisfied even though I have been satisfied even though there are times I wish things could have

been done a certain way. Sometimes I know it is impossible to do everything the way I think things should be done. I mean I don't have all the answers. I mean we want to as a parent because we know our child best to be able to say you need to do it this way and this is how he will thrive.

Moderator: What about special ed. How do you feel about the special ed service?

#2 I have been satisfied.

#5 It is hard to step in and be a good parent. It is hard not to make excuses why.

#6 What is said here won't go out of here.

Moderator: No

#6 When my child first entered the school system he was in a crisis situation. And we came with psychiatrist and social workers, I think there were about 15 people sitting on that ARD. And that set a pattern with us in that when we have had our ARDs we have always included the professionals who work with our child. And it has been critical in the path that he has taken and the decisions that have been made in ARDs. Because when the school personnel has been resistant to ideas, they have not been able to stand up to what the mental health professionals have said this is what we think. This has worked out for us. But we have had the money to pay for those professionals to come. Had we not been in that position, decisions would not have been made that should have been made.

#2 I agree with you so totally. And when my son got to be a sophomore, actually he brought it home to me. It said from then on all ARD's because he had reached a certain age, he was of legal age to make all his academic choices. If you think I didn't march straight up there and say, excuse me, he is my child and until he turns 21 and is of legal age, he is not mature enough to make his educational decisions. She said well you do

know I do not have to let you know. I told her, you better let me know as a courtesy to a parent that my child is going to ARD because he will not know how to make his decisions. And I don't expect him to be able to make his decisions at this point. And we went round and round about that two or three times. And had I not been in an educational setting and known that who knows where my child would have gone. Now this is all in high school, but for two years he was going to make his academic choices. He couldn't decide what he was going to have for lunch and he would have taken the easy road. So knowing that what you were saying, I totally agree with that.

#6 Now having said that, I am very aware that the professional side of the table were coming to the ARD with their best opinion. Looking to make good choices for my child, but what they thought was a good choice and what I thought was a good choice and what the mental health professionals thought was a good choice were always the same.

#2 Now I am going to switch hats now as an educator.

#6 I have sat on that side of the table.

#2 As an educator I felt like one of my students in one of my classes was not in the correct place and I went out and searched. I was starting to go out and look for where would be the best place for this child. And I was literally told by administrators that you can not shop for placements for the kids. And I said but I know this child and I am the school official, the go between between mom and school and if I don't know how is she going to know. I was told that I would be in trouble if I shopped for appropriate placement.

#6 Was it in this district?

#2 Yes, which really infuriated me as an educator because what is my job then. If I am not suppose to take care of this child then what is my job as an educator and if I didn't feel like that was an appropriate placement then what can I do?

#5 And is it inappropriate for a parent to shop around for placement?

#2 I don't know. But how would you know as a parent, because I don't even know. And that was very frustrating for me last year.

#6 I don't live in the district and one of the benefits of working for the district is me being able to bring my child and when this crisis situation happened and we came to the district and went to Blanton. It was interesting because I had a very good idea of the things. I knew the ropes, I knew the procedures but I had people in the know unofficially tell me this is where you child should go.

#2 So it can go either way.

#6 But I think that was a personal connection.

#3 We had our son in a private preschool and then in kindergarten and they had a social worker come and they told us there wasn't anything they could do for him in a private school so we should get him in a public school because there were people that could help. So when we came, we went to one school and moved houses and then we went to this school. And I came to this school with paper work maybe 8 inches high and said ok, these are the problems he has, is there anything you can do. And it just went from there.

#1 That is how my experience was. When my child started having problems, it was like help, what can I do. And I had very caring people kind of advise me on what to do. And I thought about it and I was so grateful that I was here (Kent Elementary) because it probably would have gone on for several more years. And he probably would have had to

sink a lot deeper before he got the level of help he did that enabled him to be successful. I have often felt sorry for people that don't have an in that had to wait a lot longer to get help. So I don't know if there needs to be more information out there for parents that is parent friendly to help them maybe diagnosis things sooner. I don't know, it just seems like it takes a long time from having a little problem in the classroom to getting all the paper work done to getting all the testing done to find out where they need to go. It can be a year.

#2 When my son came to this school, he is my step son but he chose to come live with my husband and I and he was in 5th grade and I walked in the first day and meet his teacher. Having worked with my child I knew he was below and I said I will take paperwork now he is going to be needing special ed services. She said well you know the ropes, we can't do that for six weeks. I told her, I will give you a few weeks you just let me know, I am saying parent request, you just put whatever. Your not going to be able to wait six weeks. You may use my name, you can say I requested it. And about two weeks later you called and sent paperwork's on it's way.

#6 I went to Patty Fair and I said will you accept this child in your school and he has these problems. So I meet with her on Friday and the teacher of the year from her school who was going to get my child on Monday. On Monday night she called and said he needs help.

#2 Really. I laugh at that because I thought six weeks, you will be lucky to make it a week. Because he was at least three or four years behind.

Moderator: Some of you have talked about how satisfied you are with the degree of your participation or the lack of participation. What about the others, how do you

feel or how satisfied are you with the degree of participation in the decisions regarding your child's special ed service and placement decisions.

#4 I am here for W. and I have had two other kids that have gone through public school systems. I have one that had regular services. And one that had learning disabilities too. She went to Blanton. She got discovered in second grade just like W.'s and she got the help except well back then elementary was to sixth grade. She was dismissed from the program in sixth grade because she didn't meet the criteria anymore. And I was just, I knew she would never make it, and she wouldn't and she didn't. And I hope that it is better now. In junior high, they just dropped her. They let her sink. And she started failing. And I would go up to the counselor and I would tell her, she needs help. Well she has to fail three subjects. I said well why would you let her get that low. This is a child that has no self-esteem anyway. Ya know, and I would take her to psychologist and ya know and gone through the whole thing and through junior high ya know we are still going down. And we get to Newman Smith and we are still going down and so after her freshman year and going into her sophomore year. And it was so bad, so bad that my husband and I had let her drop her and get her GED because I couldn't put her through anymore and we couldn't take it anymore. And even those counselors weren't very good. Until someone told her to go see, I don't know if she is still there anymore, her name is Dr. Pat at Newman Smith.

#1 She is a friend of mine. I love her, she is wonderful.

#4 Great. And so she went to see her and then I was called in and she still, she knew the system and knew how to get her in. She couldn't do it academically but emotionally you can test them and but no one bothered to do that before. So then she got in and she

improved and she graduated high school but to let a child go that far. Now with W. I have been very satisfied.

Moderator: So you think special ed has made progress or you are waiting to see if it has made progress.

#4 I think it has from what I have seen now. I am hoping to see if it continues as they get older and as they still need help.

#6 I believe that special ed in this district has improved and they are very, very dedicated. They really do a good job.

#2 Well I think progress has been made in special ed as far as resource is concerned. Because when my child was here there wasn't resource so they kind of band aided him. He can still not read, maybe on an eighth grade level if that. Going to school out on his own, he couldn't do it, he couldn't function. Because he can not read above an eighth, ninth grade level. Back then they didn't have, because he has been out about 3 years, so we are talking about 85, back then they didn't have resource. We had him quickly, I was thrown into parenthood very quickly. They kind of band aided him which is very frustrating because I see his life is going to be very hard due to the fact that he doesn't have the abilities, he truly doesn't.

#4 My daughter is the same way, I mean she got through school. But she never continued school after that and there is only certain amounts that she can do. She is almost thirty and it is not getting better. I mean she is living with me.

#2 Well you look at the resource group that they have got and how they push them year to year and the special ed group has done it to where ok if there here then they should be here and if their here then they should be here. And it really wasn't done like that for my

child. And another thing, when he got to junior high, and I don't know if you noticed this but the teachers kept rotating and we never had the same teacher going through the whole time. And that was kind of frustrating.

Moderator: What is your experience with a junior high age kid in the upper grades.

#1 He is in 6th grade. It has been really good. I was concerned with him being dismissed all the way because I was afraid he would sink and be overwhelmed. But I have to say that have been very sensitive to ok we are putting him out and lets put him out little by little and make sure he can handle it and give him lots of support. So it has been good, now there has been teachers that have been very good, and I don't ever want to speak ill of a teacher cause I know they try so hard, most of them. Um who truly did not understand a special ed child coming into a mainstream classroom and kind of the she doesn't like me or they didn't understand. But then the special ed teachers were there to back him and go along with him and talk to the teachers to let them know he may have some issues getting used to things. And um got him through it. So he definitely felt like he had support, and he also felt, it is just a hard age anyway. But um, it has been, he has had a few snags this year but nothing that has really set him back as far as the educational process has gone.

#5 I have two sons in special ed and one is mainstreamed and he gets support from content mastery and that kind of thing. And then there one that is totally in special ed and gets every kind of support there is. And um, the one that is mainstreamed, he is having a very hard time with his reading and he is in first grade and of course the district won't test him for dyslexia.

#7 The district won't do it but that is really not the dyslexic law. Because my child is dyslexic too. The district is not really following the dyslexia handbook because they told me the same thing and there is nothing in that handbook that says you have to be eight years old.

#5 Yea, they will not test, and the statistics on reading, especially on a boy, and if you are not reading on level by third grade the chances of you catching up are, they're harder.

That set the tone and pattern for his entire life. Um and that is frustrating to me that he is not being testing and he so clearly having problems. And he is um testing out of a level 8 and he should be at 18 and 19. And that is a difference, and I know it is frustrating for him. And with the older one, I don't know, sometimes I am satisfied and sometimes I am very dissatisfied with the way things have happened. Um but I have had some things that have happened this year and I have learned something about myself and um, because I have been here so long, I have made friendships with people, and what I have did is learn the line of friendship and between a professional relationship. So that when I went in talked to the professional who I thought was my friend, they had to step back into the professional role and ya know, that I didn't see myself doing that, but I have learned that through some incidences that have happened throughout this year. And that has been a real eye opener and it has helped clear up some things for me this year.

#1 The dyslexia thing or not the dyslexia thing, but the reading thing, not testing is interesting because my middle child who was not in special ed, well I guess he was because he was in speech but as a little thing he went through reading recovery here at this school and he is the one that in AP language arts and writing a children's book in 10th

grade for his writing project. So I don't know if that is just happens because of the person that is in charge at that time.

#7 Reading recovery is not for dyslexia.

#1 So that is not the issue

#7 In the district, if you read the Texas dyslexia handbook, they say they should be immediately remediated in kindergarten and first and second grade. So I am right now in the process, and I think my child is currently placed wrong and we are in the process of , and I hoping that come or is corrected.

#2 What are talking about dyslexia handbook?

#7 Online under TEA, and it is several hundreds of pages so be sure you have lots of ink.

Moderator: So you feel like you participation is minimal in the decisions that have been made. How do you feel your voice is being heard?

#7 Well I think when it comes to dyslexia, and I hate to say this, but I feel like some games are being played. I think it is the same thing, I think that people really want to do what is best. They have told me some things that are not really true about like the place that I went for professional help. I think that there is not really money for dyslexia that it is not really covered under special ed. I think there are some things that make it harder. I am not sure, I think they are trying to do their best, but they don't really want to diagnose it.

#5 That is like bringing an advocate to ARD and I was told by the principal that if I brought an advocate to ARD that I should know up front that we would not being having an ARD and that I would have to notify them if I were going to bring someone. And I have since found out that that is flat out wrong and I can bring who ever I want. I don't

have to notify her, I don't have to share my information, I can walk in with who ever I want and the ARD has to take place and she has to deal with it. And in some ways I feel intimidated and bullied by some things.

#2 Isn't that in that little pamphlet that they give all of us, I could wallpaper a room with that.

#5 Well that is what I am saying, is that when I talked about bringing an advocate and her flat out tell me ya know and knowing there is the handbook and that it is wrong and she just lied to me. That was very frustrating and it was intimidating. Because ya know, I am not in the know, I rely a lot on the professionals here at the school to explain to me the process of what is happening with my child. And I want to be very involved in what is going on and I want to um be very much a part of the team, and hear what the professionals are saying and at the same time I want to say you are wrong. You're wrong. And um I don't sometimes feel like I can do that.

#7 We haven't had the follow up ARD yet so I will see how that goes. But there is definitely some problems in the district on that.

Moderator: What about the evaluation process. Do you understand your role in the child's evaluation process?

#5 No

#2 Can you repeat that question again.

Moderator: We are talking about do you understand that you have a role in the child's evaluation process.

#6 The evaluation process, the initial process, initiating it or calling an ARD for decision making.

Moderator: Well evaluation, either the initial evaluation or every few years that they do it. Those evaluations. Laugh, apparently not.

#1 No

#7 No

#3 No

#5 In fact when, I was like number 6 over here, we came in a crisis situation in the district. I had no idea, I was thinking ok kindergarten and we will go where ever they tell us to go. Well we ended up having a psychological evaluation done by an outside group.

Moderator: That is part of the evaluation process as well a psychological.

#5 But it was totally not having anything to do with the educational process but she said you need to hurry yourself along over here to the school district and present this paperwork and start talking to people. And I was like ok. And part of it is that when you hear those things about your child for the first time my reaction was there is nothing wrong with him. He has these problems because this happened what does that have to do with this. And so, then anyway so when I came into the district I still didn't understand going to Marie Huie and getting an evaluation done and that whole process. And that took a very long time um before they actually placed him and then they ended up placing him in a PPCD program. And I didn't understand that whole PPCD thing, ya know, I was like ok it is a small classroom ok.

Moderator: So you also had a difficult time of knowing your role in decision of placement as well as evaluation.

#5 Yes, yes.

Moderator: What about anybody else? What was your understanding of that?

#1 I would not have understood, and I don't consider myself, I think I am fairly intelligent, I would not have understood if I didn't know personally people to ask. So I can see how that would be frustrating as a parent coming and facing with either with emotional or learning difficulties because I would not have known. I would not have understood.

#5 I didn't understand the emotional diagnosis, how that played into the educational process. I was just like those are separate things, ya know. He goes to psychologists for this and school is for reading writing and arithmetic.

Moderator: So you didn't have an understanding of how they...

#5 No I didn't understand how they would dove tail and that it really would play an impact. That his behavior would impact the classroom and his learning. How the teacher would relate to him ya know. And sometimes I feel like his behavior affects how the behavior relates to him and sometimes it is not a good thing.

#2 I am from a different perspective because I am an educator and I am a step mom and that when I got home my husband would say know why did that say this and what does this mean and why are we doing this.

Moderator: So to the typical person they don't have an understanding.

#2 they, I didn't feel like, I could make the decision because I knew the lingo and he would look at me and I would say yes we are going to do this and you are going to sign this. So when we got home he would say why are we doing this, what is going on.

Moderator: You said number 5 that it is a language that there is a lingo to learn.

#5 Ya it is like learning a whole other culture, it is like learning a language. And ya know and there is not a rule. They give you a rule book but it is still in their culture and language and no one is interpreting it for you.

#6 Another thing is that parents need to go through and what makes it so difficult is that they are scared and they are unsure. And they don't know what is happening with their child and they don't what the decisions are the ones that they need to make and which will be the right way to go. But then you go into a meeting and typically you are a parent, if you are lucky you are two parents, and you are sitting at a table with 5 people and they are all school people. And they all know it and it is extremely intimidating.

#2 And they are all looking at you. They all stare at you.

Moderator: So even as educators...

#6 No I don't have that problem.

Moderator: You don't have that problem. As educators, in the field of education you feel ok about what you are doing but as parents do you feel there is an intimidation factor there. Just as parents without being parents.

#3 A lot of it is the wording. For the longest I didn't know what CM was. And we are putting him in CM, it is content mastery. And what was content mastery. What is it. I have no idea. I didn't have a clue what it was.

#1 Exactly. I am not at my best emotionally anyway sitting in an ARD especially the very first time, even though I was surrounded by people that I really felt had my child's best interest at heart. I was still crying by the time it was over just because it was over because it is emotional.

#2 Your child is..

#1 Not perfect. They are not ok.

#6 Well there is something that I have done, when we are going to ARD if I think that whatever is going to happen is going to be smooth, I don't sweat it. But I know if I am asking for something that I think is not going to be well received I don't wait until the ARD to let them know this is what I want. Because I want us to be a team and I want them to think about what I want and I want them to be prepared so that they give it their best response. We may not agree, but I am not coming with any surprises. And it has happened where I have said in advance I would like this, this and this. Or how is this, this and this going to play out. And I would get an answer that I wasn't real comfortable with. But because we had discussed in advance when we came to ARD I don't even have to bring it up because the professionals bring it up and do what I had originally asked for. So um but I know to do that and parents don't do that. So when you come to ARD you are very nervous, you are intimidated, you are emotionally and they are unfortunately watching the clock.

#7 Yes the watching the clock is not good. Because I have had that, the teacher tried to excuse herself at the end. It was kind of a mini one it wasn't a full one.

#1 This is the most important thing in your life at the moment.

#2 It is your child.

#6 I have been surprised because some very positive things had happened that I had already reconciled myself with, saying ok, I can wait a few months on this and I didn't have to.

Moderator: Do you guys understand your child's individual education plan? Did you understand what that was and what that entailed.

#5 No

#3 No, I said what is this IEP.

Moderator: So it is difficult for parents to understand?

#5 Yes

Moderator: Do you think the professionals in the meeting explain it well or explain the purpose or?

#1 I have been where it is both ways, I have been in an ARD when everything was explained and I have been in one to where if I didn't know I would have left confused. Nothing was explained. So I have had it both ways. I just think it depends on who is running the ARD.

#2 I think that too because sometimes I go what.

#6 I think parents' don't hear enough because they may be told this but there is so much happening that it may go over their head. Whatever that IEP says it is a legal document and that is very critical. It is not optional.

#5 And knowing that piece of the puzzle will probably change some things that I have seen happen. I have more problems with the BIP plan is. He is pretty well a good student and he maintains his grades so I don't, the academic side is not what we need to deal with. Now the BIP, there are things in there that I disagree with and uh but I am not in the classroom I don't know what is going on. I am relying on the professionals that are sitting at the table to go this is what needs to happen and I don't understand sometimes some of the stuff that goes on.

#2 I think you know, my teammate now was in special ed forever and ever and ever. And I think it is very interesting that I will ask her a question and she will go oh law so and so

said and I am like, now why didn't I know about that law six years ago when I could have used it. And there are little things that she knows that I am like really, now tell me about that. And it is uh it is very interesting how certain people know the law kind of things about it and even being an educator I say well now tell me about that. Ya know so, and in CFB's defense, she works for the young lady that is in another district and we are way ahead of a lot of districts.

#6 That's right. Absolutely.

#5 That is one of the things that I have heard, do not move from this school district that the surrounding special ed districts. You do not want to step into their landmines. But it is very progressive.

#6 The district is very progressive.

#3 Is that the same at middle school?

#5 I have been at ARD's.

#2 Junior high is such a hard age.

#7 My 14 year old is not in special ed and it is a hard age.

#2 Even the regular ed kids have a hard time at that age.

#1 They are weird.

#2 It is so hard.

#1 that age of kids is...

#4 Like I said when they dropped my daughter.

#1 See I don't think that would happen now. I would hope not.

#4 They dropped her, they never helped her anymore...

#5 I think it is even the mainstream student, that every child has the right whether you are in regular ed or special ed has the right to if you are failing the teachers should come along side or somebody should be going hey there is a kid here that needs help, why are we going to let her fail three classes before we say.

#4 I am hoping that it is going to be better if she is ever going to get out.

#7 Kids in middle school seem to be failing just because they don't turn stuff in. It is that thing about the zero.

#1 Exactly, right.

#7 It is the responsibility thing. And see my child is actually on the National Honor Society but whether she remains on it after this report card. Even she is on National Honor Society, she still has a few zeros here and there. Ya know.

#1 I had a child that had a 30 at the first 3 weeks report card, have 60 at the second one and by the time the end of the grading period rolls around they had a 90. So they figure it out. It is just a different.

#2 I will say I loved high school. I loved high school. They have a wonderful program in high school. The only thing that I found that was a problem in high school was that a lot of his elected class teachers didn't know he had an IEP and didn't know his writing problem. And his was written language and they didn't know that until I would come and say have they given his IEP that he has a written language problem. And they would say no. And I am like I really didn't think so, so you might want to kind of check into that. And other than that, and those were his elective courses and he did fine. And junior high is kind of different for all of them.

Moderator: Do you all understand what takes place at the ARD meeting. Admission Review Dismissal.

#5 Well going back and this is about the ARD thing and I have had the experience where I have disagreed with something. And God forbid you sign something I disagree, it turns into, it is like a court of law, and everybody, it causes this huge domino effect, and then you start getting phone calls and letters and people talking to you and what is going on. And you are going, I just disagreed with what you said, I am not changing your mind. And they want to come back in and have another ARD and they want to go through the whole thing. It is like if you disagree with what I said I don't get to come back and change what you are doing but you are going to come at me hammering at me until I change my mind to match your viewpoint and I sign I agree. And I finally did and they weren't listening, and I let it go.

#3 We had a similar situation when we went to Marie Huie because he didn't speak until he was three and they thought he was autistic. And sent him to Marie Huie and they dismissed him when he went to Kindergarten and I disagreed and I thought he should still have speech and they said no and it wasn't until last year until they decided to put him back speech and that there was a problem there. And he is still in speech.

#2 Did you sign I disagree

#3 I said I disagreed and they didn't like that at all.

#5 That is like..

#3 So we paid and took him down to Irving and took him down there every day.

#1 I have also disagreed at an ARD before and you kind of felt like you up against the Inquisition. Ya know if you disagree with anything. And it did have a big domino effect

but it turned out ok but I feel like it took a long time. But I think it is set up that if you do disagree I think it just a shame that you are made to feel intimidated,

#5 When you don't understand the process in the first place and you don't agree with their opinion and that is what it is. It is their best opinion on what your child is doing.

#2 With my educator hat back on, I disagreed one time as an educator.

#5 What happened.

#2 It was very interesting little thing. I said I am sorry, I am not going to check agree because I don't agree.

#7 You disagree with the other professionals in the ARD or with the parents.

#2 The professionals in the ARD, I could see where the mom was coming from and I didn't after talking to her see the right placement on it. It wasn't right for the child, and when I heard what the parent was saying, and no body had their ducks in a row and it was not at this school and it was not right for this child. It was a ramrodding and it wasn't right. And I guess my conscience got a hold of me because I checked disagreed. And they looked and said you disagreed. And I went ya I do, I did it very calmly and very quietly. And you know what it turned out to be the best thing and we did more investigation of the child and did more testing of the child and found the correct placement for the child. And the parent was right. After listening to that mom talk the parent was right.

#7 See with my child, I kind of have a feeling when I look at the ARD committee, that some of the people, I don't see it in their faces that they agree.

#1 Yes, I had one poor little teacher that could not look at me in the face. I know she wanted to check disagree but I think she was probably afraid to.

Moderator: So not only do the parents feel intimidated but you think the educators feel intimidated too?

#1 I saw that the teacher was intimidated.

#7 I kind of think that too, or maybe that they are not educated enough but that their gut feel that the parent has done more research.

#2 Well number 6 knows me well enough sometimes I step out on that little limb. And it was just with that mom talking and the more she talked the more I was thinking what, what , we need to stop right here and I couldn't get the ball to stop. It was already going and already rolling and as a mom, we know our kids we know our children.

Moderator: So do you guys understand how special ed services can be delivered in a regular ed classroom? Do understand those concepts?

#5 No

#3 No

#2 Say that again.

Moderator: Do you understand how special ed services can be delivered in a general ed classroom?

#7 Are you talking about accommodations or otherwise.

Moderators: Accommodations

#7 I understand accommodations I don't really see that they are getting special ed help.

Maybe I could see how it could be done but I don't see how it is really being done.

Moderator: 4 and 3 don't really understand how their served in the regular ed classroom.

#4 Do you mean modifications,

Moderator: Yes modification, their IEP's are supposed to be followed.

#6 Accommodations can be made for any child whether they are special ed or not.

Modifications are according to the IEP and the teacher, in whatever setting the child is in, must follow that. The special ed child also gets the opportunity to go to Content Mastery for support for whatever that challenge is at any given time.

#5 Now how would you know how to ask for it if you have one that is in special ed and they are trying to mainstream and there is only one class how do you know to ask for Content Mastery.

#6 If your child is mainstreamed

#5 No I am talking about that if it is only for one class that they are leaving, how do you know that you can say they need content mastery, how do you apply it.

#6 When your child goes to mainstream class for a portion of the day and the they need additional support in that subject area. The child goes back to his home room and that teacher helps him.

Moderator: Well that was our last question, if you guys want to talk afterwards, feel free to do so.

APPENDIX I-HISPANIC FOCUS GROUP TRANSCRIPTION

Hispanic Focus Group
Kent Elementary
March 15, 2005 at 6:30 p.m.

In attendance:

#1- Hispanic mother with a child in special education for two months who is receiving speech services. The child is female and is in kindergarten.

#2-Father of high school student who was exited from special education when entering high school. The student, who is male, received special education services from 6th grade until 8th grade.

#3- Mother of male high school student. Mother is married to #2. See above.

#4- Mother of a junior high school student who is male. The student was exited from special education services when moving to the junior high school setting. He was a part of special education for most of his elementary school years.

#5- Mother of an elementary age female (5th grade) who currently receives special education services. She also has a son in high school who has received special education services since elementary school. He also currently receives special education services.

#6-Mother of an autistic, elementary age child who currently receives special education in the south part of the district.

All parents were from Carrollton-Farmers Branch Independent School District.

Moderator: Ok the first question involves the education that your child is receiving, not special education, just the general education that your child is receiving. The next question will be about special education but this question, number 1, is regarding how satisfied you are with your child's education and why or why not?

Translation on question.

Moderator: Anyone can start.

#1: I am very satisfied with my child's education. I have a child in kindergarten, 2nd grade and 5th grade. I think it is a great school and we are very pleased with it.

#5: I am very satisfied with the education my children have received. I have 3 children, ages 15, 10 and 6. Kent has been amazingly, I mean the education is just great.

#3 Answer in Spanish and then translated: She is pretty much very well satisfied with the education that 2 of her daughters are receiving. One goes to Good Elementary and one goes to Carrollton Elementary in Pre-K. But she has a son that is attending Smith and she is not very satisfied.

Moderator: Why or Why not.

#3 Answer in Spanish and then translated. Basically she said right now he is not learning.

Moderator: Is he the special education student?

#3 He used to be in special education.

Moderator: OK

Moderator: Did you want to answer that first question (to number 4)?

#4: I am extremely satisfied with the education that my son has received at the elementary level. Also here at Kent, they had an incredible support system her. When he went on the middle school, I feel that he has not received the support he has needed, maybe because they are suppose to be more independent at that level. It is not as personable.

Moderator: Has he exited special ed?

#4 Yes

Moderator: Question Number 2: What about your satisfaction level with special education either past or present.

#3 She said yes she was satisfied because he was learning a lot.

Moderator: Let me ask another question, he was exited out of special education, when was he no longer in special education?

#3 Last year, eighth grade.

Moderator: Is that part of the issue, is that he doesn't have special education services anymore?

#3 Yes, that is right.

#4 Asked a question of the parents #2 and #3.

Moderator: What was the question?

Translator for #4's Question: Basically her question was when he made the transition from special education or from exiting special education, did they call and explain the process, the plan. Basically, did they call and check how he was doing outside of his special education program.

#4 And also when the transition happened, did they explain why the transition was happening? Did she feel the school communicated why this was happening and did they understand why this was happening. And then I also asked was there a follow up to find out how the child was doing. Was it explained clearly?

#3 No, they did not understand.

Moderator: What about the rest of you, what is the satisfaction level of special education? I know your child (#1) just has a speech issue.

#1: Yes, she just had three letters that she could not pronounce well and now she is already doing it.

Moderator: Oh she is.

#1: It has been like 2 months and she is already doing it. It is like magic.

Moderator: What about your satisfaction of special education services #5.

#5: I am very satisfied with the special education that my children have received. L my 15 year old has done extremely well, I have noticed with J that she is not grasping it as

quick as L did but I don't think it is because of the support they are giving her. I think it is just her social activities that are keeping her from that. But as far as the special education, I think that it has been wonderful.

#4: I tend to agree with number 5 in reference to the support given to the child while the child is in school and targeting the objectives. Yet as an educator myself at a masters level, attending ARD meetings, if I did not ask many, many questions I had no idea what these meant and so many times they would use acronyms and maybe they assumed that since we are in education we know. But I didn't. And part of my job is to sit at ARD meetings and sit with non-English speakers and translate. And I have found it to be the same and in the my case even though I understood the system and I was at the level that I could understand I was still at a loss. And there I am with twenty years of education under my belt. And then you have the limited English speakers that are very at even understanding our educational system and it is not very well presented at an ARD. They called me and I believe that I am a very good translator and it is difficult for any person to translate and I believe that, my minor is in Spanish. But I believe that the critical issues that are being discussed at an ARD meeting it is very necessary to have a person that is qualified to be a translator that knows exactly being said.

Moderator: So someone with the Spanish speaking skills but also with a special education background.

#4 Exactly. And as an English speaking person I was still at a loss. I still had to ask a lot of questions or I would not have known what they were talking about. It is a difficult concept to understand. And as a parent you are hurting for your child, you are thinking oh

my gosh what is happening to my child. And many things are not explained to the degree and level that I believe a parent should be explained.

Moderator: Do you the non-english speaking parents are uncomfortable asking questions? Or are they asking questions in these meetings?

#4 I have not been in an ARD with all English speaking parents that I can recall. But I have another colleague, she is also an educator. She asked me, she said go with me, even though I understand and I speak perfect English, I don't think, it very uncomfortable I don't catch a lot of things and I leave very confused. Another educator that is English speaking and she felt the same way.

Moderator: So do you think they are intimidated at the ARD

#4 Yes, it is also extremely intimidating because you have 5 or 6 people giving you their titles and you are thinking what is this?

#1 You are thinking the worse. I also translate for the ARD meetings. So if I don't understand what they are saying I have to translate exactly what they are saying at the moment they are saying.

Moderator: So they are not able to explain it even in English even for an English speaking educator can understand.

#4 What you have to translate, you are suppose to be translating exactly what you are asking me to translate. You are not explaining to the level that she is understanding and she is going to have to answer a yes or no question. She doesn't have knowledge of what you are asking her. And I have to explain what this means, let me break it down and explain it to you. My position, I can do it when they call me in but if I was just a translator I would have to just translate. I have seen it for 15 years in this district and I

know that every ARD that I have attended they have asked me to attend a second ARD meeting because the first time when the parent went in alone it was not successful. Many times I was also invited by the ARD committee.

Moderator: New person came in. What school do your children go to? Do you need a translator?

What was your name? She wrote it down. #6. We will let her answer the question about how satisfied she is with special education. She will be number six.

Moderator: And what school was her child from

#6 McLaughlin and McWhorter

Moderator: Did she want to answer the question

#6 She is satisfied with the education of both of her children.

Moderator: What is their disability?

#6 Little girl is autistic and the little boy is hyperactive

Moderator: Are you satisfied with the degree of participation and the decisions of your child's special education placement?

Moderator: The class, the content mastery, that kind of placement.

Question was rephrased two times by two individuals.

#2 He is not satisfied with his participation because first of all the way he found about the child's participation in the program was through his child. Through his child he found out he was going to start special education classes.

Moderator: When did he start special education classes?

#2 6th grade and basically he feels he didn't have any say, he was just informed by his child when he was starting his special education classes as well as when he was exiting

his special education classes. No one called him and formally explained when it was beginning and ending.

#4 When I was called into an ARD meeting, again the group of 5 or 6 people, it seemed that everyone had it pre recorded and written and prepared. I remember initially saying it seems that you all have decided the placement of my child and it was already written up and I basically had to agree and they didn't realize I was going to ask many questions. And whatever the report was it had a different look by the time the meeting was over. That is what happens also when I walk in with another family as a district representative and helping them ask all the right questions. And again that is intimidating and it is perceived by the person going into that meeting that you have already made that decision, why are you bringing me into here to get my feedback.

Question rephrased again by participant #4 for participant #2

#2-Basically number 2 said he had the opportunity to sit in two ARDs for his child and basically he said it was him by himself and when he got to the ARD there were 5 or 6 teachers and the assistant principal of the school and by the time he got there they had already a report and a decision of where his child was going to be placed. Basically what he is saying is by the time he gets there it is basically just to sign papers and agree with what they already have written. And also the problem with the language is even more intimidating because he feels that he doesn't have that much input and decisions are already made.

#4 Speaking for #2-They do offer him a copy of the paperwork.

Moderator: They do or don't

#4 Speaking for #2 They do.

Moderator: I want to ask another question of #2, If he is uncomfortable with something that is in the meeting, does he not say anything or does he voice his opinion?

#2 He says that when he feels intimidated and once he gets there and everyone tells him what they have to say he feels like there is nothing much more to say.

#4 for #2 No he didn't walk in there intimidated. The feeling of intimidation has occurred because of the setting that gives him the feeling that he can't say anything.

Moderator: So he feels he can't say anything.

#4 for #2 He won't. As he walks in it is a said and done thing and it is very intimidating.

Moderator: Does understand that he has a right to disagree?

#2 No, he doesn't know.

Moderator: Anybody else on the satisfaction on the degree of participation of special education placement and services? Have you been satisfied so far.

#1 Yes, I have been satisfied.

#6 Translated by #4- She is explaining that her rights, first of all they had a great discussion about what was the best placement for the child and they gave all the different options for proper placement. They went along and gave her a list of laws and told her that she could appeal or agree or disagree with a paper stating her rights.

#4 for #2 (#2 had made a comment while #6 was speaking) He said that would have been great, that would have helped.

Moderator: Sorry to interrupt.

#6 continues. Basically she said her experience has and continues to be good. She is informed of any changes, good or bad and they are open to her input especially conduct of the children.

Moderator: So McWhorter and McLaughlin, she finds that experience in both schools?

#6 Continues. Yes, Basically she started out saying that yes, both schools have followed the same procedures. The second grader little boy who is at McWhorter, the little girl who is in fourth grade at McLaughlin and who is autistic and so far for the two years that she has been in special education, she has been seeing the same procedures. #4 asked if they had always had a translator for her and she said yes and that they have always been very good about because personally she knows that when you have a translator who you know you not only have to conduct the meeting but you also have to have somebody translate and it usually takes more time than usual and they have been very considerate.

Moderator: Do you understand why your child is eligible for special education?

#3 Says no.

#5 They have always explained to me stage by stage what was going on with my child. I am very pleased with it.

#4 Can you repeat the question.

Moderator: Do you understand why your child is or was eligible for special education? The eligibility component a learning disability, or....

#4 Ok It has nothing to do with a standard deviation or

Moderator: It really does have to do with that, with all those things.

#4 Ok that is another thing, when you don't explain specifically what you are talking about you think we know what you are talking about. If you talk about placement and procedures it is two different things. If you say do you know why your child is in special ed, I would say oh yes because he has a learning disability. But was that your question, or what is your question.

Moderator: It is eligibility, you feel that they don't express what eligibility means exactly.

#4 Even in your question right now, it is assumed that we all understand what eligibility is. And based on number 5's answer, I would ask her about standard deviation, gap, did they explain all that?

#5 I can't say that they did and I am going to go back to the question that we were asked a minute ago. I agreed with number 6 in regards to rules and the forms and everything and that things we are suppose to understand and all the copies we are suppose to getting. That has always been done however, going back to number 2 saying that he feels intimidated. If you are not a strong person and you walk into a room with about 5 or 6 people looking at you and of course you don't speak English, it is very, very intimidating. Now I haven't had that problem because of the type of person I am, but not every person is like me. So I am like #4 and I ask a lot of questions. But if you don't feel as strong as you did the day before it can be intimidating even for me. That hasn't happened to me yet, but it could. I do agree.

#4 And did they explain to you the definition of the disability.

#5 No, they have never explained to me why.

Moderator: From your experience do you feel it is because you wouldn't understand or that it is not important or why do you think they do not explain it?

#4 I think it is a time factor and so many people have to give a report again assumption is that you really don't know as well the program. It is an injustice because we have a right. And it says on that brochure that if anyone would take the time to read that is suppose to be clearly stated.

Moderator: What about #6 with a child with autism

#6 Explained in Spanish.

#4 Interacted and said some things in Spanish.

Moderator: Tell me what she (#6 said first) and then what #4 said.

Interpreter for #6 She was satisfied with education her children are receiving and when they tested her child they told according to test, this is what we determined that your child has. They explained that a doctor, school psychologist, so they can her a list of symptoms for that particular disability and they had asked her had she been seeing these symptoms. They basically did match. So they did start explaining the her what it was, before that she didn't know. She couldn't put a name to the symptoms that her child was saying.

Moderator: And what did you say (#4)

#4 I did ask so they did explain the symptoms, she got the symptoms explained. But my question went back to did they determine how they came up with the symptoms, what test was given, how did they measured the symptoms and what is normal intelligence versus because of 1, 5 and 20 it is determined that your child has a 22 versus 100. All those things were examples.

#6 Answered in Spanish.

#4 Asked more questions,

#6 answered yes in Spanish and continued to talk.

Moderator: What is she saying.

Translation for #6 Basically she is explaining that she started noticing disabilities in her daughter when she was four years old and she went to the Marie Huie center. I think she got through a bulletin and she noticed that they offered special help. She said that when she went there they gave her the opportunity to explain why she was taking her daughter there. And she explained that is was because she had been seeing some disabilities that were not normal. They offered, and they told her she was going to be tested mentally and physically and after that they would offer her a test that was going to be given by the psychologist.

#4 She is totally off, she is totally off topic. Asked another question in Spanish.

#6 answered yes in Spanish. Talked some more in Spanish.

#4 Asked more questions.

#6 Answered some more in Spanish.

Translator for #6, tried to translate.

#4 Asked more questions.

#6 Spoke more in Spanish.

#4 She is explaining that process of when you are given the questionnaire to qualify and she is going on and on about that process and that it is very good.

Moderator: For hyperactivity or for autism.

#4 For autism

#6 spoke in Spanish

#4 said something back in Spanish

Moderator: I need a translation. You are coming to my house to help me translate this.

Lets go on to the next question. Do you understand the role in child's evaluation process in the beginning.

#2 and #3 No

#4 could you rephrase that.

Moderator: The evaluation, you really pretty much have answered but you didn't know he was going to be in special education. So they weren't aware of the evaluation process, like the testing (#2 and #3)

Translated question.

#3 Basically she said ya, she answered the question before and she was never informed that her child was entering special education.

Moderator: Did you understand the evaluation process?

#5 I understood it because I actually came and asked for the evaluation myself. I saw the disability long before the school saw the disability. So I asked for it before they started the process and it went and after I asked for it went well.

#6 And so did number 6. She asked for the testing as well.

Moderator: What about how much you understand regarding how decisions are made about placement? Do you understand how decisions are made, like did they go to CM, did they understand how decisions are made.

Translated.

Moderator: Like support center, etc.

#4 I felt very satisfied, because again I asked many many questions and based on all my options that I asked for and then I made my decision.

Moderator: Then you understood.

#4 And then I understood.

#5 Can you repeat that question one more time.

Moderator: Do you understand how decisions are made on your child's placement.

Do you understand how decisions were made to place your child?

#5 Yes I did understand it pretty well.

#6 Yes

Moderator: What about your child's IEP, Individual Education Plan? Did you understand what that was?

Translated question.

#2 and #3 No

#5 I have to say I didn't understand it either. Even being able to ask questions and try to. I didn't know what IEP was, I had to literally ask what was IEP. Things are done so fast sometimes, you kind of go with the flow. You have to ask what does that mean because they don't explain, or at least it wasn't explained to me.

#4 It wasn't explained to me either and the only reason why I knew was because of my background in education.

Moderator: What about number 6?

#6 She said they did explain what IEP was.

Moderator: Is her child with autism, she or he has an IEP. What about the child with hyperactivity or ADHD?

#6 The boy doesn't have one, the girls does with autism.

Moderator: Does the boy have special education services? The boy is the one with hyperactivity?

#6 yes he is receiving special service.

Moderator: But she says he doesn't have an IEP?

#5 She probably doesn't know what IEP is.

Moderator: It is how they are going to educate the child. What steps are they going to take to teach her child. If it is learning her numbers, doing puzzles, learning algebra at 70%. It is basically how they are going to teach her child.

Translated question to #6 again.

#4 Translated also.

#6 Basically she says that I am thinking that it is not that specific.

#4 Explained again.

#6 She saying yes.

Moderator: What services does her son receive? Content mastery?

Lots more translation went on.

Moderator: What is she talking about? What did she say first.

#6 Translated, she is talking about he goes to art, he goes to p.e. but I tell her those are activities.

He has one teacher.

Moderator: He must not have special education services. He probably just has ADHD.

Do you have an understanding of what takes place at the ARD Admission, Review and Dismissal meeting?

Moderator: Admission, Review and Dismissal

#2 and #3 They don't understand what it is.

#4 Probably after the fourth meeting, I understood what it was.

Moderator: Did you have an understanding number 5?

#5 Yes I understood after a few of the meetings. I understand it now because I have been doing it for my 15 year old.

Moderator: Do you understand number 6.

Moderator: And the last question is do you understand how special education services can be delivered in the regular education classed?

#4 Yes

#5 No

#2 and #3 No

#6 Yes

#5 I guess they don't understand the question. I guess it is part of the study that you are doing.

Moderator: I will explain it now. Have they explained modifications?

#5 Now I do understand that, In those terms I do understand.

#4 But in the regular education classroom

#5 Yes I do understand it when you say it that way.

#4 Translated to #2 and #3

#3- She gets her answers through the custodian and assistant principal at Good Elementary because she works at Good. But in the ARD meeting she doesn't understand it.

#5 It goes back to her not feeling comfortable in that type of setting. Right?

#4 translated this to #3

#3 Perry never invited her to ARD meetings. The reason why she hasn't been attending is because she works at night.

Moderator: I appreciate your information.

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