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# Development of Effective School-Family Partnerships for Students from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds: From Special Education Teachers' and Chinese American Parents' Perspectives

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## Abstract

The purpose of this exploratory study was to investigate and develop effective school-family partnerships for students with disabilities from diverse backgrounds, specifically focusing on teachers and parents of Chinese American students with disabilities. Interviews and observations with two parents and two teachers were used to capture their perspectives, including their successful and unsuccessful experiences in the interaction process and their expectations for building effective communication to promote parental involvement and students' educational success. Several barriers influencing parents' meaningful participation are identified in the current study. Findings regarding the perspectives of special education teachers and Chinese American parents about successful interactions will be provided. In addition, several applicable strategies are recommended to develop effective partnerships between educators and parents from diverse backgrounds.

## Introduction

Rapid demographic changes are occurring in schools. A major concern in the field of special education today is the provision of effective service to diverse populations (Poon-McBrayer & Garcia, 2000). In special education, parental involvement in children's educational decision-making is legally mandated (*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act,* 2004). Additionally, the *No Child Left Behind Act* demands local school districts to increase parental involvement and family support for students' learning (NCLB, 2001). However, educators frequently report having difficulties in teaching students with culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds and collaborating with their parents (Chang, 1995; Park, Turnbull, & Park, 2001).

Although the notion of partnerships between parents and educators has been in the spotlight for decades (Blue-Banning, Summers, Frankland, Nelson, & Beegle, 2004), the development of partnerships between schools and CLD families has not been an easy task (Park et al., 2001). Beyond having the role of volunteers or donors for school-related activities, parents are required to be equal partners in the Individualized Education Program meeting, collaborating with professionals in their

children's learning (IDEA, 2004). Unfortunately, when parents and teachers come from different backgrounds, the intercultural interactions have the potential to create communication problems (Joshi, Eberly, & Konzal, 2005). In reviewing the literature, a variety of factors inhibiting successful partnership between CLD parents and teachers are identified: limited English proficiency, unfamiliarity with home-school partnerships, negative past experiences with schools, and insensitivity on the part of school personnel regarding families' culture (Bermudez & Marquez, 1996; Lo, 2008; Park et al., 2001).

According to previous research (Chang, 1995; Poon-McBrayer & Garcia, 2000), Asian American students are under-represented in special education, and as a result, it is important to consider parent-teacher partnerships in facilitating students' school success. In addition, there are variations in cultural orientation among Asian American populations. Although Chinese American students represent one of the fastest-growing Asian American student populations in public schools, it is an invisible population in need of effective special education services (Chang, 1993; Lo, 2009). It also has not been possible for school districts across the nation to recruit appropriate personnel to work effectively with Chinese American students with disabilities. Therefore, it is imperative to examine the partnership from the perspectives of teachers and parents of students with disabilities from Chinese American backgrounds.

## Theoretical Perspectives
### School-Family Partnership
In education, the term "partnership" can be defined as "mutually supportive interactions between families and professionals, focused on meeting the needs of children and families" (Summers et al., 2005, p. 66). The areas in which parents can collaborate with educators in a child's learning are as follows: (a) communicating with educators about school programs and the child's progress; (b) being involved in school activities as volunteers or donors; (c) supporting the child's learning at home with parental aspirations and expectations, such as assisting the child's homework, providing other learning, and structuring the home environment; (d) providing basic obligations about the children's health, safety, and learning; (e) advocating or participating in decision-making on school programs and the child's learning; and (f) collaborating with community organizations to get necessary resources and services and providing information or resources to the school and child (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Singh et al., 1995).

Blue-Banning and her colleagues (2005) characterized family-professional partnerships into six components: a sense of equality, commitment, positive communication, respect, trust, and competence. First, the partners feel a sense of equity in collaboration and consider each other an equally powerful influence on decision making and taking actions. Second, the partners acknowledge each other's unique devotion and validate the contributions. Third, the partners have positive and respectful communication by sharing resources and information clearly. Their communication must be sufficient and effective in terms of quantity and frequency of communication. Fourth, the partners show respect during the interactions and collaboration. They do not intrude on or discriminate against each other. Fifth, they trust the partner's character, ability, and strength. Finally, the partners perceive their roles in community, and respect each other's strength in order to become competent in collaboration. Parents and professionals are willing to learn continuously in order to meet students' needs. The indicators according to six components of partnership are shown in Table 1.

*Table 1*

Six Components of Collaborative Family-
Professional Partnership with Related Indicators

| Partnership theme | Indicators |
|---|---|
| Equality | Avoiding use of "clout," empowering partners, validating others, advocating for child or family with other professionals, allowing reciprocity among members, being willing to explore all options, fostering harmony among all partners, coming to the table/ avoiding "turfism," acting "equal" |
| Commitment | Demonstrating commitment, being flexible, regarding work as "more than a job," regarding child and family as "more than a case," encouraging the child and family, being accessible to the child and family, being consistent, being sensitive to emotions |
| Communication | Sharing resources, being clear, being honest, communicating positively, being tactful, being open, listening, communicating frequently, coordinating information |
| Respect | Valuing the child, being nonjudgmental, being courteous, exercising nondiscrimination, avoiding intrusion |
| Trust | Being reliable, keeping the child safe, being discreet |
| Competence/ Skills | Taking action, having expectations for child's progress, meeting individual special needs, considering the whole child or family, being willing to learn |

Note: Adapted from "Dimensions of family and professional partnerships: Constructive guidelines for collaboration," by M. Blue-Banning, J. A. Summers, L. L. Nelson, & G. Beegle, 2004, *Exceptional Children, 70*(2), pp. 167-184.

## Barriers to Develop CLD Families' Partnership

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (1978) and Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (1986) stressed that interactions between people and interactions between people and environments influence learning. Both theories imply that school success for students from CLD backgrounds should be viewed as a socially negotiated process involving interactions with persons, environments, resources, and goals (Walqui, 2006). When teachers do not share their students' socio-cultural backgrounds, the teaching-learning process may be impeded by possible misunderstandings and frustrations (Nasir & Hand, 2006).

Developing partnerships with CLD families has been a challenge for some schools due to diverse barriers to CLD parent's involvement in school (Garcia, Perex, & Ortiz, 2000; Park et al., 2001). Many CLD families have reported little contact with educators and participation in school programs, teacher-parent conferences, and parent-teacher associations (Park et al., 2001; Tatto et al., 2001). The language factor has been identified as the most critical barrier to CLD parents' participation. Due to limited English proficiency, CLD families are reluctant to contact educators and actively participate in school programs and activities. Communication with CLD families has mostly been one-way from educators to parents. Although the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) entitles CLD parents to request interpreter services, they prefer not to use it because it takes too long to communicate with teachers. Especially for the parents of students with disabilities, it is hard to find qualified interpreters knowledgeable in special education (Park et al., 2001).

In addition to the language obstacle, cultural differences can prevent CLD parents from interacting with educators. CLD parents may have different values regarding educational expectations, child-rearing styles, beliefs about disabilities, and types of communication. Regardless of how long they have lived in the United States, most CLD families practice their culture and traditions at home (Garcia et al., 2000; Loveless, 2001; Shor, 2005). Moreover, CLD parents may have diverse views about the teachers' disciplinary actions in the classroom. The perceptions of desirable/challenging behaviors and its acceptance can vary greatly, depending on different cultural and societal norms around the world. These cultural and perception differences may impact the CLD parent-educator relationships.

Third, a lack of information and prerequisites to educate or advocate for their children in the United States is another barrier to CLD parents (Park et al., 2001). Parents in the Park et al. study (2001) reported having little information on school policies, criteria of grades,

and special programs or services provided by schools or communities. Specifically, the CLD parents of students with disabilities often indicated that they did not know their parental rights and responsibilities outlined in the due process requirements, individual education programs, assessment and placement decisions, available health and special education services, and transition programs. In addition, because of lack of advocacy skills, when problems occurred, they reported not speaking up or taking actions to actively resolve the problems.

Fourth, CLD parents report teachers' indifferent attitudes and lack of expertise in working with CLD populations as barriers to involvement in school activities (Garcia et al., 2000; Sileo & Prater, 1998; Tatto et al., 2001). According to the literature, teachers have different expectations, depending on parents' socioeconomic status, ethnic background, and their children's achievement level (Tatto et al., 2001). For instance, some teachers may believe that low-income parents are neither interested in their child's achievement nor can they participate in schoolwork. Other teachers may regard parents of at-risk students as at-risk parents. Similarly, teachers may have low expectations toward minority parents and assume that they are not interested in being involved or participating because of their limited English abilities. Previous research (e.g., Park et al., 2001) revealed that educators have low expectations of CLD parents' participation and have little contact with minority parents. As a result, educators sometimes do not regard CLD parents as equal partners, especially when the teachers believe CLD parents have little interest in school-related activities (Park et al., 2001; Sileo & Prater, 1998; Tatto et al., 2001).

Furthermore, teachers reported having insufficient knowledge and skills to work with CLD populations (Utley, Delquadri, Obiakor, & Mims, 2000). The teachers in the Utley et al. (2000) study responded that they did not have adequate communication skills and lacked the training to work with multicultural populations. Among the needs, "parental communication skills" ranked first in what the teachers wanted to be trained for to work

with the CLD populations. CLD parents of students with disabilities also wanted educators to provide them with useful information on available resources and services related to special education. Parents wanted to have the big picture of their child's learning and future plans in the American educational system.

## Methodology

Partnerships between CLD parents and schools in a child's special education require effective intercultural communication (Summers et al., 2005). In addition, parent-professional collaboration is legally mandated, and parents are required to be actively involved in the decision-making process about their child's placement and services (IDEA, 2004). The special education literature has documented low levels of parent participation for CLD families (Boyd & Correa, 2005; Sileo, Sileo, & Prater, 1996), but little-to-no research focuses on Asian American populations, specifically on Chinese American students (Chiang & Hadaian, 2007; Doan, 2006). To meet the needs of Chinese American students and their families, educators need to collaborate with parents and communicate with each other regarding the children's program and learning progress. Therefore, research is needed to understand the nature of parent-teacher communication for Chinese American families and their children's teachers to promote parent-professional partnership. The purpose of this exploratory study addresses the following questions:

1. What are the issues and needs for establishing school-family partnership for CLD parents, especially from the perspectives of special education teachers and Chinese American parents of children with disabilities?

2. What are the essential components for teachers to develop effective partnerships with Chinese American CLD parents?

### Participants

The participants in this study consisted of both teachers and parents recruited from central Texas independent

school districts. The criteria for selecting parents included: (a) parents must be a first- or second-generation family to live in the United States (i.e., their original country was China, Taiwan, and/or Hong Kong); (b) parents must have at least one child with disabilities; and (c) the child with disabilities must attend a school within the central Texas independent school districts. Teachers selected for this study (a) must be the main special education teacher for the Chinese American students who are the focus and (b) must have taught in a special education classroom. Characteristics of the four participants are presented in Table 2.

### Table 2: Participant Information

| Participant Information | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | Chinese American Students | |
| | *Kirk* | *Max* |
| Age | 14 | 6 |
| Grade | 8 | K |
| Rank in Family | 1/2 | 1/2 |
| Type of Disability | Emotional Disturbance | Developmental Delays |
| Placement | GED* and SED | Self-contained SED* |

| Family Participants | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | *Ms. Chen* | *Ms. Ho* |
| Country of Origin | China | Taiwan |
| Immigrant Status | First generation | Second generation |
| SES | Low SES | High SES |

| Special Education Teacher Participants | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | *Mr. Clark* | *Ms. Tiffany* |
| Race/Ethnicity | White | White |
| Years of Teaching | 2 | 2 |

*GED: General Education; SED: Special Education
*All participants' names are pseudonyms.

### Research Procedures

*Data Collection.* The researchers used a qualitative research design for this study. This research was designed to investigate the perspectives of Chinese American parents regarding the parent-professional partnership in special education. Once the invited participants submitted their informed consents, the researchers conducted face-to-face interviews. The interviews consisted of two parts (See Appendix I and II). The first part collected background information, and the second part focused on the issues regarding parent-professional partnerships in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the research. The first interview was an opportunity for the researchers to get to know the participants. The first interview would allow the researchers to later identify any relationship between each participant's background and their partnership with the school personnel from the mainstream culture. The interviews were recorded via digital voice recorder and transcribed and analyzed for emerging themes and concepts.

The researchers conducted a second, in-depth interview with each participant. The purpose of the second interview was to provide an opportunity for researchers to understand the participant's perspectives regarding parent-professional partnerships and to focus on the unique experiences of the Chinese American parents who have children with disabilities. In addition, the second round of interviews helped the researchers support the reasons for the definition of parent-professional partnerships, the existence regarding discrepancies between parents and professionals, and how to build effective parent-professional partnerships. The researchers were also able to learn how the cross-cultural partnerships between Chinese American families and educational professionals impact the quality of a student's education.

Observations for this study focused on how parents and teachers communicated students' educational goals and expectations, how they communicated with each other regarding parent-teacher collaboration, and how they dealt with any disagreements about the student's program, or differences in communication style. The researchers took field notes and used a digital recorder during the formal parent-teacher meeting.

*Credibility of the Research.* The researchers used three procedures to assure fidelity of data interpretation. The first method utilized was data triangulation

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Multiple sources of data may include various copies of one kind of source, such as multiple participants, or different sources of the same information. In this research, multiple sources of data included four participants (i.e., two Chinese American parents and two special education teachers), field notes, digital voice files, and interview protocols (i.e., see Appendix I and II). The second procedure used was member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After data analysis, all participants received drafts of the analysis. The researchers contacted the four participants to discuss whether the analyses accurately reflected their instruction and ideas. It gave the participants an additional opportunity to comment on and contribute to the data. The third procedure used was prolonged field engagement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Repeated observations and in-depth interviews increased the soundness and completeness of the research.

## Data Analysis

The researchers recorded parental interviews using digital voice recorders. Once all the data were collected, field notes and transcripts were analyzed using the constant comparative method, which consisted of four overlapping stages. In the first stage, data were collected and coded into categories. During the second stage, data were clustered into similar categories (e.g., actively participating in the child's education and directly talking to principal about her child's needs) to generate themes (e.g., advocating for their child). In the third stage, themes were examined for potential theoretical implications, and in the last stage, an initial understanding of parent-professional partnership for Chinese American parents was identified (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

## Results

### Points of View

We generated four themes from our study: advocating for their child, mismatched expectations about special education services, communication barriers, and collaboration to build effective communication. The

researchers used pseudonyms throughout the data collection, analysis, and reporting of findings.

*Advocating for their children.* As we inquired about parents' perspectives of their communication with the current teacher about education, both parents first shared their knowledge and beliefs in understanding special education systems and their parental rights. By exploring how they acquired their knowledge and skills for advocating on behalf of their child, we identified how parents prepared themselves to communicate with schools and teachers to ensure their child received appropriate educational support. For example, one parent, Ms. Chen, expressed her concerns about whether teachers had sufficient knowledge in meeting her child's special needs. When the teachers asked Kirk (Ms. Chen's child) to meet the requirements of reading performance like other students, Ms. Chen actively advocated for him to make sure the teachers held the reasonable expectation. From both teachers' perspectives, they also clearly reported that both mothers were good at advocating for their child's needs. Therefore, the teachers learned that both parents valued education highly.

*Mismatched expectations about special education services.* Both parents and teachers addressed their expectations of each other. Through the process of interacting with districts, schools, and teachers, both Chinese American parents shared how they recognized the difficulties and struggles during the interaction, especially for Ms. Chen (being the first-generation immigrant and with low socio-economic status). Based on the events both parents and teachers encountered (e.g., conflicts in Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting), teachers were unaware of cultural differences when addressing the expectations regarding the students' education. Both teachers assumed they had done enough for the child, but were not aware of any hidden messages conveyed by the parents. For example, because Mr. Clark (one of the teachers) thought he had a good relationship with Ms. Chen, he was not aware of Ms. Chen's unhappiness about the education goals for her son. In addition, all four participants

expressed the need to negotiate with districts and schools rather than with teachers (because teachers did not have the final authority to make some decisions). It was this lack of communication and mutual understanding that caused a problem in reaching the same expectations.

*Communication barriers.* Communication barriers were discussed during the interviews. Factors related to communication barriers included cultural insensitivity and unstated assumptions about communication. Moreover, when parents expressed their expectations of teachers (such as providing modification and interpreters for their children), the teachers misinterpreted the parents' words based on the teachers' assumptions and cultural norms. For example, Mr. Clark thought that Ms. Chen was happy about the assignments he gave to Kirk because she consistently expressed her appreciation to him. He was not aware of Ms. Chen's expectation of Kirk's education goals until Ms. Chen addressed her concern in the IEP meeting.

*Collaboration to build effective communication.* Both parents and teachers agreed that successful communication is the result of coming together to work toward success for the child. All four participants further reported that ensuring the students' school success involved crucial components that were student-centered, parental support, teacher support, and collaboration. Both teachers explicitly reported that the parents supported what the teachers did for their child at school. Furthermore, the teachers felt appreciated by the parents for what they did for the students. They believed that this was one of the reasons for the success of their communication. Both parents also stated that it was important for teachers to understand their desires for educating their child in order to build positive relationships. Therefore, establishing an open line of communication between teachers and parents can facilitate the foundation of cooperative relationships (Summer et al., 2005).

Finally, teachers need to take into consideration the prerequisite skills and knowledge, expectations, communication and relationship, and challenges to communication to build effective intercultural communication between teachers and Chinese American families of children with special needs. The four participants suggested several essential communication components to promote parent-teacher communication and enhance students' learning outcomes. These components were (a) maintaining two-way communication, (b) valuing parental involvement and the parents' role in their child's education, (c) increasing cultural awareness and sensitivity, and (d) developing the characteristics of a good communicator (e.g., willing to share and respect for each other).

## Discussion

### *Building Effective Parent-Professional Partnership: Implications for the CLD Population*

Based on the perspectives of the teachers and Chinese American parents of children with disabilities in the current study, the findings supported previous research (e.g., Park et al., 2001) that communication barriers and cultural differences might affect CLD parent-professional collaboration. Meanwhile, the literature (Summers et al., 2005) suggested successful parent-professional partnership should consider importance of equity in collaboration as well as advocacy skills. In the current study, we also found that Chinese American parents consistently advocated for their child (e.g., making school teachers aware of their child's educational needs). Reflecting on the findings of the current study, we propose the following suggestions for developing effective partnership with CLD parents:

*Clarifying roles and responsibilities.* In many cases, conflicts between educators and parents result from the overlapping but different roles each play in a child's learning (Loveless, 2001). In order to develop positive relationships between educators and CLD parents, both educators and CLD parents should strive to define their roles in the relationship clearly. CLD parents need to regard themselves as partners, advocates, decision makers, and experts of their child. Parents need to take an active role in understanding and identifying what responsibilities are entailed in these roles. Parents need to actively seek out

information in order to address their concerns for their child. Parent participation benefits not only the individual child of concern, but it also contributes to the overall school reform movement to make education meaningful for all. When educators hold low expectations, the CLD parents feel hesitant and discouraged to participate in school. As a result, educators need to think of CLD parents as partners and respect their roles and expertise. Such relationships foster reciprocal accountability in a student's learning.

*Providing supportive communication services.* As previously mentioned, insufficient communication skills and unilateral communication between educators and CLD parents are major barriers to establishing family-school partnerships. Specifically, lack of English proficiency of CLD parents inhibits them from interacting with educators. Therefore, in order to develop successful communication lines and dynamic interactions, necessary supportive communication services (e.g., parent liaison) should be provided to CLD parents. Educators need to explore the different modes for providing accessible communication channels to parents and have an open line of communication available to parents for questions or concerns. Another means to communicating with CLD families would be for the school to provide school newsletters written in the native language of the CLD family, information on the use of interpreters, occasional notes, email, etc. If CLD families agree, it may be helpful for schools to contact community-based organizations that may be able to assist and support the school and families. Outside of school, there are a number of resources that schools and families enlist for support, such as parents of the same ethnic group, ESL teachers working in other schools or institutions, religious groups, and foreign students studying in the United States.

*Developing criteria on parent involvement.* Educators report that it is difficult to involve parents in school activities due to lack of standards on parent involvement. Therefore, it seems important to clearly define the roles of parents for CLD families so that they are aware of their

responsibilities and opportunities for participation related to their child's educational needs and progress. Schools need to do a better job of encouraging parents to take on a more active role and participate in the educational process for their child and school activities. Schools need to actively invite CLD parents to school and encourage parent participation. According to the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model, the variables promoting parental involvement are an invitation for involvement from schools as well as parental role construction and parental efficacy (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005).

*Sharing concerns, visions, information, and resources.* In order to build collaborative leadership, educators and parents should share their concerns, visions, information, and resources with each other. This requires a supportive school culture based on trust, respect, and commitment. When educators and parents build a strong consensus on important issues and have common goals on students' learning, partnerships are developed for positive school reform (Tatto et al., 2001). Schools need to make sure that CLD parents understand school reform issues, are able to read and understand data on achievement of a school as well as a child, and are able to monitor the effects of school reform on their child's learning. Especially for CLD parents of students with disabilities, it is important that families understand parental rights, due process, placement decisions, IEP, and family services. It would be helpful to give CLD families a handbook written in their native language that addresses these important topics.

*Networking and forming a community-collective approach.* CLD parents are usually the minority parent group in most school systems. As a result, a collective approach might be helpful in establishing partnerships. To provide effective interventions to CLD students, teachers can construct teachers' inquiry groups consisting of teachers, CLD parents, or other members from the community. To receive useful information, resources, and services, CLD parents can network with other CLD parents, and link to community resources beyond school boundaries (e.g.,

community-based organizations or other CLD parent groups). Within the educational community, CLD parents can feel collective power, receive necessary help from outside sources, voice their concerns, and take actions actively. Regarding the decision-making process about the learning of the parents' child, educators should push the school system to provide high-quality public education to CLD students, and insist on its appropriateness.

*Cultivating expertise consistently.* Lack of prerequisites by CLD parents and lack of expertise and training of educators to work with the CLD population inhibit establishing school-family partnerships. In line with distributed leadership, educators and CLD parents might be asked to share their rich experiences as one of the multiple experts. In order to cultivate their expertise, mutual and ongoing learning is required on each side. For educators, a socio-cultural perspective is necessary to understand any cultural differences of the CLD population. They need to be open-minded to accept and respect differences in order to achieve effective communications skills, ecological approaches to considering individual CLD students' environments, and develop expertise to provide culturally responsive practices.

For CLD parents, they need to be knowledgeable about parental responsibilities and their child's rights. To advocate for changes in the school system, parents need to become familiar with the U.S. educational system and learn about the accountability mechanism in relation to the CLD population (or students with disabilities) and school reform issues. In regards to their child's learning, parents need to ask schools for information and clarification when something is not understood or unclear in order to advocate for the support their child's needs.

Parents should cultivate their expertise to be leaders and partners with educators.

## Conclusion

Although the effects of school-family collaboration on students' learning have been emphasized, participation of CLD parents and/or CLD parents of children with disabilities has been neglected in school reform efforts. CLD parents have found it difficult to build partnerships with professionals in the mainstream school systems (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Although previous studies have focused on the parental perspectives of certain ethnic groups (e.g., African Americans, Latino Americans, and Native Americans) regarding parent-professional collaboration in special education (Lim & Renshaw, 2001), little is known about the perspectives of Asian American parents of children with disabilities in regards to this topic. This study emphasized the importance of developing equal partnerships through communicating with Chinese American parents. Specifically, the issues of parental involvement need to be investigated in light of whether they participate in a school in a meaningful way, rather than whether they are involved in school or not.

Given the perspectives of both special education teachers and Chinese American parents on how to promote meaningful CLD parental participation, the building of new, positive relationships in partnerships is needed. Partnerships require a sense of equality, trust, and respect toward each other. With this, parents and teachers should communicate mutually, demonstrate commitment, and cultivate their competences consistently in order to enhance students' achievement.

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## Appendix I

*Interview Protocol: Part I Background Information*

*Teacher*

1. Please tell me about yourself —
   Family/Personal information
      a. Who are the members of your family?
      b. What is your religion?
      c. How do you identify yourself? Were you born and raised in U.S.? Where do you come from?
      d. What language do you speak?

2. Please share with me your communication style with your family:
      a. What is relationship of your family member?
      b. How does your family communicate with each other? What happens when your family discusses serious or emotional issues?
      c. How does your family help each other when somebody needs help?

3. Please share with me your teaching journey:
      a. What is your teaching philosophy?
      b. What's your education background?
      c. Did any events influence you to be a special education teacher? When did you start to be a special education teacher?
      d. How do you develop your cross-culture skills?
      e. Do you have any experiences working with families from minority or non-English backgrounds?
      f. How many Asian/Chinese American students have you taught?
      g. Do you speak any Asian/Chinese language?

4. Please tell me about the class you are teaching.
      a. What class are you teaching?
      b. How long have you been teaching this class?

*Parents*

1. Please tell me about yourself —
   Family/Personal information
      a. Who are the members of your family? Who are living with you?
      b. Where are you from originally?
      c. What is your religion?
      d. Please tell me when and why you came to the U.S.
      e. How long have you been in the U.S. and Texas? And your family?

2. Please tell me about the use of language:
      a. Languages spoken between you and other families.
      b. Language spoken between you and other adults.
      c. Languages spoken between you and your child/children.

3. Please share with me your communication style with your family:
      a. What is relationship of your family member?
      b. How does your family communicate with each other? (in a direct or indirect style)
      c. What happens when your family discusses serious or emotional issues? (Does your family share feelings? Do they feel comfortable in discussing issues?)
      d. How does your family help each other when somebody needs help (e.g., has troubles, feels frustration, etc.)?

## Appendix II

*Interview Protocol: Part II Interview Questions*

*Teacher*

**Interaction with Students**

1. Please share with me your relationship with students:
    a. How long have you been teaching this student?
    b. What kind of education or services did she/he receive here?
    c. What languages are used to communicate with this student?
    d. What label is given to this student?
    e. How did this student get the label?
    f. How would you describe this student? (e.g., academics, social performance, and personality)

2. Please share your expectations or goals for this student:
    a. Educational/academic areas.
    b. Social/emotional development.
    c. Career expectation.
    d. How did you plan to accomplish these goals?

3. Please share interaction between you and the student
    a. How do you get to know this student when you met him/her the first time?
    b. When you interact with this student from a culture different from yours, how do you handle your feelings? How do you put down your assumptions?
    c. What is most difficult when you work with this student from a cultural and linguistic background different than yours?

**Interaction/Communication with Families**

1. Please share with me your relationship with families.
2. Please tell me your expectations of families.
3. Please tell me the information regarding contact with families:
    a. How often is your interaction with the family?
    b. Under what situations have you contacted the student's family?
    c. Under what situations has the student's family contacted you?
4. Please share with me communication between you and families:
    a. How do you communicate with families about the student's educational goals?
    b. Under what situations have you cooperated with families?
    c. How do you build effective communication with families?
    d. What is the effective way to communicate with families in different situations? What is the barrier? How do you handle it?

*Parents*

**Identified Child's Information — Families' Perspectives**

1. Please share with me your child's information:
    a. Where did your child attend school? What grade and class?
    b. What kind of education or services does your child receive?
    c. Who and how do people (e.g., teachers) tell you that your child need to receive this service?
    d. How do school personnel describe your child?
    e. What languages does your child use to communicate with peers and teachers?
    f. When and how did you find out your child is different from other children? How will you explain your child's differences?
    g. What do you see as the possible explanations for your child's disability?
    h. How would you describe your child? (e.g., academics, social performance, and personality)

2. Please share your expectations or goals for your child:
    a. Educational/academic areas.
    b. Social/emotional development.
    c. Career expectation.
    d. How did you plan to accomplish these goals?

**Interaction/Communication with Teachers**

1. Please share with me your relationship with teachers.
2. Please tell me your expectations of teachers.
3. Please tell me the information regarding contact with teachers:
    a. How often is your interaction with the child's teacher?
    b. Under what situations have you contacted the child's teacher?
    c. Under what situations has the teacher contacted you?
4. Please share with me communication between you and your child's teacher:
    a. How do you communicate with the teacher about your child's educational goals?
    b. Under what situations have you cooperated with the teacher?
    c. How do you build effective communication with the teacher?
    d. What is the effective way to communicate with teachers in different situations? What is the barrier? How do you handle it?

*Teacher*

Experiences and Perspectives of Partnership with Parents

1. Please describe the typical interaction with families at IEP meetings, teacher-parent conferences, and other contact situations.
2. Successful experiences:
    a. Can you share with me any good experiences of interaction with families?
    b. Why were you impressed with these good experiences?
    c. What makes effective parent-teacher partnership?
3. Unsuccessful experiences:
    a. Can you share with me any bad experiences of interaction with families?
    b. Why are you impressed these bad experiences?
    c. What makes these negative experiences?
    d. What can you do for improving the negative experiences next time?

*Parents*

Experiences and Perspectives of Partnership with Teachers

1. Please describe the typical interaction with the teacher at IEP meetings, teacher-parent conferences, and other contact situations.
2. Successful experiences:
    a. Can you share with me any good experiences of interaction with the teacher?
    b. Why are you impressed by these good experiences?
    c. What makes effective parent-teacher partnership?
3. Unsuccessful experiences:
    a. Can you share with me any bad experiences of interaction with the teacher?
    b. Why are you impressed these bad experiences?
    c. What makes these negative experiences?
    d. What can you do to improve the negative experiences next time?