

**Title:** An Attitudinal Study: Perceptions of Teachers, Parents and Public School Stakeholders Concerning the IEP Process and Development

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### **Abstract**

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) process plays a vital role in the instructional process of the individual with ELN (exceptional learning needs). The IEP process helps to level the playing field for students with ELN against those students that do not have diagnosed learning problems. From the parents to the students to the IEP staff, they all play a vital role in developing an individual plan for the success for the students with ELN. This study will investigate the perception that the IEP staff has on the parents who are involved with the IEP process. The perceptions will not only come from just the student's teacher, but also from administrators, and counselors. This is an important topic because the IEP process was implemented from government legislative, to make sure all students who have a diagnosed ELN receive a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. The findings in this study can be used in the future of education to improve the relationship between parents and stakeholders that are involved in the IEP process.

### **Introduction**

By the year of 1970 only one in five children with disabilities were being educated in U.S. schools (Martin, 2007). Many states had laws excluding students with disabilities from being able to go to public schools with the general education students. In 1975 the Education for

All Handicapped Children Act; most commonly known as Public Law 94-142 was passed (Martin, 2007). This was passed to protect the rights of children with disabilities and their families.

Prior to P.L. 94-142 parent involvement in the education of their child with a learning disability was very limited and not prescribed (Vaughn, Bos, Harrell & Lasky, 2001). The involvement varied according to the interests and commitment of the professionals involved (Vaughn, Bos, Harrell & Lasky, 2001). Public Law 94-142 was amended in 1997 and again in 2004, and became known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act –( IDEA 97, IDEA 04) (Martin, 2007). IDEA was created for schools and parents to share the responsibility in ensuring that students with ELN have the opportunity for an equal education (Fish, 2008). In legislation that was passed, it was a requirement that every attempt be made possible for the parents to attend and play a vital role in the development of the IEP process (Fish, 2008).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was created to ensure that students with disabilities receive a free and appropriate public education. One hallmark of IDEA is the promotion of collaboration between school districts and parents of children with disabilities. The letter and spirit of IDEA encourages a working relationship between the home and school that fosters an educational team with the goal of providing the child with appropriate services (Margolis, 1998).

IDEA provisions regarding parent involvement imply a picture of the family and school team working together amicably sharing visions and goals, and ultimately making decisions collectively. Unfortunately, this scenario is not always the outcome (Margolis, 1998). Under IDEA, all students with disabilities are entitled to a written statement of present educational

performance, measurable annual goals, and special education services and accommodations (Martin, 2007). This is known as an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

An IEP is used to describe the goals the team has set for the child with ELN for the school year, as well as any special supports that are needed to help achieve those goals. Each IEP must be designed for one student and must be a truly individualized document (Martin, 2007). The IEP creates an opportunity for teachers, parents, school administrators, related services personnel, and students to work together to improve educational results for children with disabilities (Martin, 2007). At the IEP meeting there must be the special education teacher, general education teacher, counselor, an administrator, and the parents. Parents do have the option to sign a waiver to not to come to the meeting.

Other individuals who are able to come to the meeting can be anyone the parents choose to invite or if the student choose to invite someone. If the student is receiving any kind of assistance from special services such as social worker, occupational therapist, physical therapist, or speech and language pathologist, it is important that they attend the meeting as well (Martin, 2007). At the meeting this team will analyze the student's educational needs and discuss their present performance in the classroom. At this meeting, measurable annual goals and short term objectives for the student to work on for the following year are discussed (Martin, 2007). The IEP should be updated annually and can be changed at any time based on any of the team members concerns (Martin, 2007).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this study was to determine 1) if parental academic back ground impact their involvement in the IEP process, 2) how do teachers' negative perceptions impact their ability to work with parents in the IEP process, and 3) will active parental involvement

encourage the IEP team to explore all possible options so the students with ELN can be as successful as possible? Many educators feel frustrated when there is a lack of parental involvement in the educational success of their children, especially children with a disability. It frustrates them more when parent's lack of knowledge and involvement hinders their professionalism in the IEP process.

### **Significance of the Study**

All students, including student with learning disabilities have the right to a fair and equal educational opportunity. For students with exceptional learning needs, the IEP team is responsible for making sure they receive education the same as the general education students. The IEP team is a collaborative group that includes teachers, administrators, special service providers, and the parents (Martin, 2007). Each member's role of this team is just as important as the next role. Parents should be assured that they are working with professional who are working who have the best interest for the development of their child. Data and research gathered shows some evident that parents in an IEP meeting display some opposition to the IEP team. Research indicated that parents with varying backgrounds find it difficult to establish rapport to the IEP team (Martin, 2007). This study will attempt to explain the difficulty in connecting with the IEP team and development.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided this study:

1. Will parental academic back ground impact their involvement in the IEP process?
2. How do teachers' negative perceptions impact their ability to work with parents in the IEP process?

3. Will active parental involvement encourage the IEP team to explore all possible options so the students can be as successful as possible?

### **Hypotheses**

1. Parents' academic background impacts their involvement in the IEP process.
2. General and special education teachers' perception of parental impact their readiness to work with parents during the IEP process.
3. Parental involvement encourages the IEP team to explore many possible options for students' success.

### **Abbreviations**

1. IEP- Individualized Education Plan
2. IDEA- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
3. IDEIA- Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act
4. P.L. 94-142- Public Law 94- Education of All Handicapped Children Act
5. CADRE- Consortium for Appropriate Dispute Resolution

### **Definitions of Terms**

The following terms have these meanings:

1. **Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142)** - According to this study this act required all public schools accepting federal funds to provide equal access to education for children with physical and mental disabilities and evaluate handicapped students and create an educational plan with parent input that would emulate as closely as

possible the educational experience of non-disabled students (U.S. Department of Education, 2011)

2. **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act IDEA-** According to this study it is a United States federal law that governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to children with (U.S. Department of Education., 2011)
3. **Measurable Annual Goals-** According to this study measurable goals include academic and functional goals designed to meet the child's needs that result from the child's disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education (U.S. Department of Education, 2011)
4. **Individual Education Plan (IEP)-** According to this study an IEP consist of goals the team sets for a child during the school year, as well as any special support needed to help achieve (U.S. Department of Education, 2011)
5. **Due Process Hearings-** According to this study due process hearings are actual court hearings where the district and the child's family participate in a legal procedure that is focused on the evaluation and resolution of the issue of (U.S. Department of Education, 2011)

### **Review of Related Literature**

When placing a student in special education there is a great deal of concern that comes over the parent (Vaughn, Bos, Harrell & Lasky, 2001). The placement of a parent's child in special education can affect the parents' perception of the child and the parent can also see themselves as incompetent parents (Vaughn, Bos, Harrell & Lasky, 2001). The IEP staff needs

to remember that the parents play a vital role in the development of the IEP for the student because no one knows the student better than the parent.

Research has shown that an increase in parent involvement can lead to an increase in students' achievement (Vaughn, Bos, Harrell & Lasky, 2001). Research also shows that communication is the key to successful parent involvement and both teachers and parents agree that communication is pivotal to foster and maintain a positive school and home partnership (Ambrosetti & Cho, 2005). Bad communication between the parents and the IEP staff can lead to a negative impact on the students' success. It is essential that lines of communication between teachers and parents are kept open to help improve the perception between the IEP staff on the parents and the parents' perception of the IEP team (Ambrosetti & Cho, 2005).

### **Types of Parents**

Parents can come in several types. The first type is the well-intended parent (Zachary, 2010). These parents know just enough about special education to make legally significant statements on the record (Zachary, 2010). These parents don't really understand the full ramifications of what they are doing and tend to do more harm than good. These parents usually have some kind of back ground knowledge about special education.

The second type of parent is the emotional parent. These parents tend to be overwhelmed by the process and can lead to the parent breaking down during IEP meetings (Zachary, 2010). The emotional parent tends to hold up the IEP process so it cannot be finished and forward movement is undermined (Zachary, 2010).

The third type of parent is the parent that has disabilities and when they set foot in an IEP meeting they tend to have post-traumatic flashbacks (Zachary, 2010). These parents become intimidated by the teachers and other members of the IEP team that have some form of advanced

degrees. This unintended emendation leads to the parent not effectively participate in the IEP process. These parents normally do not have an advance academic back ground.

The fourth kind of parent is the parent who comes to the IEP process is the “I don’t care attitude” parent (Zachary, 2010). These parents do not take the IEP process seriously and don’t care whether their child receives educational benefit or not. These parents also tend to opt out of just not coming to the IEP meeting altogether. These parents lack the knowledge and academic back ground to understand the harm they are doing to their children.

The fifth kind of parent is the parents who just don’t want the school system getting into its family business (Zachary, 2010). These parents are suspicious of the IEP staff and refuse to participate in the IEP process.

The sixth kind of parent is the parent who lives in denial (Zachary, 2010). These parents don’t want to acknowledge that their child has an exceptional learning need and they also refuse to participate in the IEP process.

The last type of parent is the emotionally unstable parent (Zachary, 2010). This parent should not be confused with the parent who is emotional about their child’s education. The emotional unstable parent engages in antagonistic behaviors with public education agency personnel (Zachary, 2010). They often change their minds a lot about remedies in mid process. Research also states these parents often put their child through one unnecessary assessment after another in an effort to prove there are right when there are wrong (Zachary, 2010). Emotional unstable parents often files one unfounded complaint after another. They are convinced that there is a conspiracy all the way up to the top of the chain of command. Their main goal is often not to provide their child with the necessary educational benefits but to prove they are right (Zachary, 2010).



In the eight different categories that are mention parental types, it should be noted that parents can fall in into more than one of the categories. Parents that fall in these categories make the special education process difficult for many parents of children with special needs. Classifying parents based on these biases is an unfair practice by teachers and administrators (Zachary, 2010).

### **Parental Perception of Staffing**

There are many factors that constrain parental perception of the IEP staff. The IEP staff that has narrow vision of parental involvement and culture differences can a lead to a parent having a bad perception of the IEP staff (Ambrosetti & Cho, 2005). Parental perception plays a vital role because it can affect how the parent collaborates with the IEP staff. If a parent has a positive perception of the staff then the parent will be more open minded and the IEP process and development becomes pleasant. Without parental pressure, many of the services now provided to handicapped children would not exit (Witt, Miller, McIntyre & Smith, 1984).

The role of the parent and the schools' perception of that role have changed gradually over the last several decades from that of a guilty scapegoat for their children problems to political activist and litigant(Witt, Miller, McIntyre & Smith, 1984). In today's society parents and the IEP staff have become more of a partnership to help the progress of the student. Parents are becoming more informed, and therefore more interested and better able to contribute to their children's educators (Witt, Miller, McIntyre & Smith, 1984). These are some factors that have combined to support an active, participatory partnership between parents and school personal.

With research showing parents are becoming more aware and knowledgeable on the topic of the IEP process, there is a convincing evidence which suggests that we are nowhere close to an equal partnership with parents (Witt, Miller, McIntyre & Smith, 1984). IEP staff members

that have a bad perception of parents make it more difficult to see parents as equal partners in the IEP process. The IEP staff feels that parents should play a more passive role (Witt, Miller, McIntyre & Smith, 1984). They want the parents to come in and listen and add their input when asked. At the end of the meeting they want the parents to agree to whatever the IEP staff decides what's best for the child. This passive thinking by the IEP staff is one of the reasons so many parents have a bad perception of the IEP staff. Parents tend to have a bad perception of the IEP staff if they do not allow them to have a lot of input (Witt, Miller, McIntyre & Smith, 1984). A lack of input is not the only variable that can lead parents to have a bad perception of the IEP staff. If parents are pleased with the program or progression of the IEP, they will be less likely to have dissatisfaction with the staffing (Witt, Miller, McIntyre & Smith, 1984). Difficult parents will automatic have a bad perception of the staff because of their frame of mind. The IEP staff necessarily has not done anything for this parent to have a bad perception of them. These are the parents that the IEP staff needs to work closely with to have changed that negative perception (Witt, Miller, McIntyre & Smith, 1984).

The research and data clearly shows that there are multiple positives of parent involvement in schools (Ferrara, 2009). Parent involvement increase students' academic achievement and it also helps promotes positive student attitudes and behaviors (Ferrara, 2009). When a parent has a bad perception of the staff or school then the parents' involvement will be less active in the school.

### **Projection of Success of the IEP Process**

Harmful communication between parents and the school staff of an IEP team can have negative impact on the students' success at the school (Ferrara, 2009). Teachers that have negative perceptions of difficult parents can hinder the teacher from providing the student with

the best education opportunity (Ferrara, 2009). Difficult parents who have a close mind mentality can also contribute to the failure of providing the student with the best educational opportunities. When teachers work patiently with difficult parents and when parents work with the teachers, it increases the chances of the student to become successful (Ferrara, 2009).

One of the main goals between the parent and the school staff of working together is to improve the education opportunity for the student, and in return it should lead to a better success rate for the student graduations (Virginia Department of Education Report Card, 2009). Based on the statistics of the Virginia Department of Education (School Report Card, 2010), the graduation rate for eligible students to receive an advance or standard diploma was below 60%. The static information is based off the years between 2005 and 2010 (Virginia Department of Education Report Card, 2009).

This kind of information is for students that have an IEP and is eligible to graduate with either a standard or advance diploma. In the year of 2005 there was a 55% graduation rate for students with an IEP who received an advance or standard diploma. From the year of 2006 through 2008 the graduation rate for students with an IEP was below 47%. In the year of 2009, it increased to 50% and it also increased again in 2010 to 53% graduations (Virginia Department of Education Report Card, 2010). Based on these statistics, eligible students with an IEP are not graduating high school with a standard or advance diploma. These students are leaving high school with a certificate of completion. These certificates mean that the student attended high school but did not graduate from high school with any core credits. With teachers and parents successfully collaborating in the IEP process, it should help increase the number of students with IEPs to increase the graduation rate with an advance or standard diploma in the Virginia public school system (Virginia Department of Education Report Card, 2010). “We want our students

with exceptional learning needs to be just as competitive as our regular education students”, (Spokesman, VDOE, 2010).

### **Procedures for Resolving Disputes between Parents and School District**

There is a major gap in special education conflict resolution procedures that exists today (Margolis, 1998). There are three formal procedures for resolving disputes that IDEA has established to help protect the educational rights of children with disabilities (Margolis, 1998). The three formal procedures for resolving disputes are due process hearings, formal complaints, and mediation (Margolis, 1998). The number of due process hearings between parents of children with disabilities and school districts is growing nationwide (Margolis, 1998).

Research has shown that due process is expensive, adversarial, and leaves the resolution is made by outsider (Margolis, 1998). A hearing officer is required to objectively listen to both sides of the issue and to make a decision following the letter of the law a hearing officer plays the role of the judge. This litigation costs billions and can also destroys the relationships between the home and school system (Margolis, 1998). The Consortium for Appropriate Dispute Resolution (CADRE) showed that during the 2005 to 2006 academic year, 19,042 due process hearings were requested nationally with 5,385 actually going to a fully adjudicated hearing (Margolis, 1998). The costs accrued per hearing can range in the amounts of \$50,000 to \$100,000. Based on the CADRE report; school districts across the United States potentially spend more than \$90 million a year in conflict resolution. From the data it shows that too often districts and parents experience conflict that results in an extremely emotional and financially draining strategy for resolution (Margolis, 1998).

## **Improving the Parents Perception by understanding how to work with Difficult Parents**

In the research, it states that one of the ways the IEP team can improve their perception of parents is educating the parents on what's best for their children (Zachary, 2010). As a teacher professional you sometimes have to jump through a number of hoops to educate the parents on their rights so that they understand what is really going on, what is really a violation of the law, and what are their real options (Zachary, 2010).

Parents who make the IEP process more difficult because they do not have the understanding or the academic back ground to understand the circumstances. Different methods work for different parents. For some parents you will have to insist that all communications go through you. For parents who are less active in the IEP process or always have some excuse for why they cannot attend, the research states that the parent should have more power in coordinating the IEP meeting (Zachary, 2010). The parent can choose the date and time of the meeting, rather than a teacher forcing a time or a date. Emotional parents that tend to hold up during IEP meetings usually are parents who have not come to the terms that their child has a handicapping condition (Zachary, 2010). The parent also could be having an emotional flashback to their troubles as a student. They may feel that they are being judged by the school personnel and because of their clouded judgment they understand very little about what's going on in the IEP meeting. So in a situation where the parent is going through an emotional tough time it is important for that teacher to walk the parent through the process and checking with the parent from time to time for understanding to make sure the parent is not lost (Zachary, 2010).

The research also stated that some key words that can be used with a parent to check for understanding can be what this means is...., or you have several options here, or you can do X or Y or Z, or here are the pros and cons of each option, and you can ask questions that normally the

parent wouldn't know to ask (Zachary, 2010). As teachers and administrators it is important that everything is done to make sure the parent fully understands what is going on. According to the research the parents in denial are one of the most difficult parents to work with (Zachary, 2010). These parents don't want any help and it is not a whole lot a teacher can do about that. There is little to no communication with these parents and because the lack of communication it is hard to make these parents understand that their children are struggling in school and need help. The research also states that communication with suspicious parents is very low because they do not want any one meddling in their family affairs (Margolis, 1998). They also don't want to disclose personal family business to anyone. The data states that suspicious parents tend to be poorly educated, have low income, and don't trust anyone in a higher social economic status than their own (Zachary, 2010). These parents tend to come from the Deep South where racism, social class, discrimination against the handicapped, and against those with disabilities of the mind still thrive (Zachary, 2010). The research states, that these parents themselves are very racist and classiest towards school personnel. These parents do not like to give outsiders insight into their private lives even if it deprives those who are legitimately trying to help their child's educational needs (Margolis, 1998). A lot of time the parents do not understand they are depriving their child and they think they are doing what's best for their child. One of the big issues with these parents is trust. When working with these parents it is very important to let them know all the options that are available to their child and also let them know what's the benefits and consensus of their decision (Margolis, 1998).

You need to make these parents understand that we are all working together in the best interest for their child. Also because of their lack of trust it may be in the best interest of the IEP team to have one person of contact for the parent (Margolis, 1998). The person of contact should

be someone the parent feels comfortable around and has good lines of communication. Not all suspicious parents come from impoverished or uneducated backgrounds, in some cases they may have experience or been victims of a terrible series of events that have left them traumatized (Zachary, 2010). Working with these kinds of suspicious parents require a lot of hand holding thought out the IEP process. Emotionally unstable parent may come in many different varieties and come in different severity levels (Zachary, 2010).

Mental illness and emotional instability are not like anything else in life: there are ranges of severity and how the problems manifest. No two people are alike, including people with mental and emotional health issues (Zachary, 2010). . It is very important that you do not lump these kinds of parents together. Parents with relatively mild problems are easier to be deal with and a lot of time all they require is patience. It's the parents with the more extreme cases that you have to worry about (Zachary, 2010). These kinds of parent can become upending if they do not get their way. Working with more extreme emotional parents you have to make sure you have everything in order and anything you explain to them you have to back up with documentation (Zachary, 2010). These parents also are very aware of what the laws are and are very argumentum if they feel their child is not receiving the proper help (Margolis, 1998).

## **Methodology**

The purpose of this study is to determine the perceptions of the teacher and administration staff towards the parent involvement in the IEP process. For this study, a survey designed by the researcher will be distributed to current administrators and teachers that actively participate in the IEP process. The chosen staff will come from high and low poverty schools. The chosen teachers will range from beginner highly qualified teachers to advance highly qualified teachers.

## **Research Questions**

The following questions guided this study:

4. Will parental academic back ground impact their involvement in the IEP process?
5. How do teachers' negative perceptions impact their ability to work with parents in the IEP process?
6. Will active parental involvement encourage the IEP team to explore all possible options so the students can be as successful as possible?

## **Hypotheses**

4. Parents' academic background impacts their involvement in the IEP process.
5. General and special education teachers' perception of parental impact their readiness to work with parents during the IEP process.
6. Parental involvement encourages the IEP team to explore many possible options for students' success.

## **Population and Sample Demographics**

The sample of this study consists of teachers, administrators, and parents from three high poverty high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools. The sample consists of three low poverty high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools. The participants for this study were the 30 teachers, administrators, and parents from School X. The schools were located in rural and urban areas in central Virginia. Some of the parents, administrators, and teachers who participated in the study were residents of the county where the schools are located. The sample selected for this study had experience with the IEP process and the IEP team. The sample population was composed of parents, teachers, and administrators. The sample in the study have had experiences in grades k through 12



School X is located in a small rural and urban community in central Virginia. The enrollment of the schools was approximately 500 students. The majority of the students who attend School X were on free or reduced lunch. Students who were eligible for free or reduced lunch come from low socioeconomic environments. The ethnicity of this school was approximately 85% African American, 14% Caucasian and 1% other. The special education population had approximately 90 % African-American and 10% Caucasian.

### **Instrumentation**

Data for the study was collected using a survey developed by the researcher. The survey was geared towards teachers and administrators. The design of the questions was aimed to determine the perceptions of teachers and administrators toward parents during the IEP process and the IEP team. To answer the research questions, the teachers and administrators need to use their experience and knowledge from past IEP meetings. The questions are designed to show the difference in teacher and administrator perceptions based on their level of experience. The surveys were hand delivered to the teachers and administrators at designated schools. There was an auto response for the teacher or administrator to accept or decline to participate in the survey. A verbal reminder was given to ensure a timely return for each participant.

### **Design of the Study**

This study was a descriptive research design that used a non-standardized attitudinal survey to determine the perceptions of teachers and administrators toward parents during the IEP process and the IEP team. Descriptive research involves collecting data to answer questions about the current status of issues or topics (Gay and Airasian, 2003).

## **Methods of Analysis**

The surveys were collected and analyzed. The answers to the survey were recorded. The data for each survey items were reported in a table using frequency and percentage of responses. A statistical analysis was performed with the scores collected from the survey. The responses determined the perception of teachers, administrator, and parents toward the IEP process and the IEP team.

## **Analysis of Data**

The purpose of this study was to conduct research which evaluates the perceptions teachers and administrators have on parents' involvement in the IEP process. In particular this study surveyed what the teachers and administrators felt about parental involvement in the IEP process. Specifically, the research questions were:

1. Will parental academic back ground impact their involvement in the IEP process?
2. How do teachers' negative perceptions impact their ability to work with parents in the IEP process?
3. Will active parental involvement encourage the IEP team to explore all possible options so the students can be as successful as possible?

The study focused on collecting data from teachers, school counselors, teacher assistance, and school administrator from a survey that was prepared by the researcher.

## **Treatment of Data**

The study used 50 surveys. From the 50 surveys that were handed out 41 were returned. After surveys were returned the researcher prepared to disaggregate the data. The researcher tabulated the responses in percentages. The survey data results are disaggregated in 12 questions

and 6 possible answers for each question. The range of the six possible answers was as follows:

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree and Non-Applicable.

*Table 1. Survey Results*

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Do parent's academic backgrounds impact their involvement in the IEP process?	n=0 0%	n=3 7.32%	n=5 12.2%	n=16 39.02%	n=17 41.46%
Parents possess little knowledge about the IEP process?	n=0 0%	n=3 7.32%	n=8 19.51%	n=14 34.15%	n=16 39.02%
Parents do not keep up with their children education?	n=0 0%	n=1 2.44%	n=10 24.39%	n=18 43.9%	n=12 29.27%
Parents have difficulty with the understanding of their role in their children's' education?	n=0 0%	n=8 19.51%	n=8 19.51%	n=15 36.59%	n=10 24.39%
Parents do not understand the language used during the IEP process?	n=0 0%	n=8 19.51%	n=10 24.39%	n=15 36.59%	n=8 19.51%
Do general and special education teachers' perceptions of parents' impact their readiness to work with parents during the IEP process?	n=0 0%	n=3 7.32%	n=4 9.76%	n=25 60.98%	n=9 21.95%
Teacher and parents' relationship can have an impact on the IEP process?	n=0 0%	n=6 14.63%	n=5 12.2%	n=19 46.34%	n=11 26.83%
Inexperience teachers have a negative perception of difficult parents?	n=0 0%	n=5 12.2%	n=8 19.51%	n=13 31.71	n=15 36.59%

Proper training of new teacher on how to deal with difficult parents can lead to a better perception of the difficult parent?	n=3 7.32%	n=4 9.76%	n=5 12.2%	n=16 39.02%	n=13 31.71%
The IEP team should include tenure highly qualified teachers?	n=3 7.32%	n=5 12.2%	n=4 9.76%	n=22 53.66%	n=7 17.07%
Does parental involvement encourages the IEP team to explore many possible options for students' success?	n=2 4.88%	n=6 14.63%	n=7 17.07%	n=19 46.34%	n=7 17.07%
Active parents in the IEP school are more active during the IEP meeting?	n=0 0%	n=4 9.76%	n=4 9.76%	n=22 53.66%	n=11 26.83%
IEP staff will welcome active involvement from parents in the IEP meeting?	n=2 4.88%	N=3 7.32%	n=6 14.63%	n=19 46.34%	n=11 26.83%
Inexperience parents in the IEP process show more opposition towards the IEP staff?	n=4 9.76%	n=4 9.76%	n=7 17.07%	n=23 56.1%	n=3 7.32%
Tenure highly qualified teachers involved in the IEP process ensures the success of the student?	n=1 2.44%	n=5 12.2%	n=7 17.07%	n=17 41.46%	n=11 26.83%

## Findings

For survey item #1- 41.46% of the respondents felt that parent's academic backgrounds impact their involvement in the IEP process, 7.32% of the respondents felt that parent's academic background do not impact their involvement in the IEP process, and 12.2% expressed no opinion; Survey item #2- 73.17% felt parents possesses little knowledge about the IEP

process, 7.32% of the respondents disagree that parents possess little knowledge about the IEP process, and 19.51% expressed no opinion; Survey item #3- 73.17% of the respondents felt that parents do not keep up with their children education, 2.44% felt that parents do keep up with their children education, and 24.39% expressed no opinion; Survey item #4 60.98% of the respondents felt parents have difficulty with understanding of their role in their children's education, 19.51% feels that parents do not have difficulty with the understanding of their role in their children's education, 19.51% expressed no opinion; Survey item #5 56.10% of the respondents felt that parents do not understand the language used during the IEP process, 19.51% felt that parents do understand the language used during the IEP process, and 24.39% expressed no opinion; Survey item #6- 82.93% of the respondents agreed that general and special education teachers' perceptions of parents' impact their readiness to work with parents during the IEP process, 7.32% disagree that general and special education teachers' perceptions of parents' impact their readiness to work with parents during the IEP process, and 9.76% expressed no opinion; Survey item #7- 73.17% of the respondents felt that teacher and parents' relationship can have an impact on the IEP process, 14.63% felt that Teacher and parents' relationship cannot have an impact on the IEP process, and 12.2% expressed no opinion; Survey item #8- 32.08% of the respondents felt that inexperience teachers have a negative perception of difficult parents, 12.2% did not feel that inexperience teachers have a negative perception of difficult parents, and 19.51% expressed no opinion; Survey item #9-70.73% of the respondents felt that proper training of new teacher on how to deal with difficult parents can lead to a better perception of the difficult parent, 17.08 felt that Proper training of new teacher on how to deal with difficult parents will not lead to a better perception of difficult parent, and 12.2% expressed no opinion Survey item #10- 70.73% of the respondents felt that the IEP team should include tenure highly

qualified teachers, 19.52% felt that the IEP team should not include tenure highly qualified teachers, and 9.76% expressed no opinion; Survey item #11- 63.41% of the respondents felt that parental involvement encourages the IEP team to explore many possible options for students' success, 19.51% felt that parental involvement does not encourage the IEP team to explore many possible options for students' success, 17.07% expressed no opinion; Survey item #12- 80.49% of the respondents felt that active parents in the schools are more active during the IEP meeting, 9.76% felt that active parents in the schools are not more active during the IEP meeting, and 9.76% expressed no opinion; Survey item #13- 73.17% of the respondents felt that IEP staff will welcome active involvement from parents in the IEP meeting, 12.2% felt that IEP staff will not welcome active involvement from parents in the IEP meeting, 14.63% expressed no opinion; Survey item #14- 63.42% of the respondents felt that inexperienced parents in the IEP process show more opposition towards the IEP staff, 19.52% did not feel that inexperienced parents in the IEP process show more opposition towards the IEP staff, 17.07% expressed no opinion; Survey item #15- 68.29% of the respondents felt that tenure highly qualified teachers involved in the IEP process ensures the success of the student, 14.64% felt that tenure highly qualified teachers involved in the IEP process did not ensure the success of the student, and 17.07% expressed no opinion.

The three research questions that guided this study were answered using the percentage tabulations of each survey item. According to the statistical analysis, respondents felt that prenatal background did impact their involvement in the IEP process; teacher's negative perceptions impacted their ability to work with parents and active parental involvement encourages the IEP team to explore all possible options. Therefore all hypotheses are accepted.

## **Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations**

This study was completed in October and November of 2011. Using a researcher-designed attitudinal survey, according to the responses of the sample population of teachers, paraprofessionals, school counselor, and administrators, 86% of the respondents felt that parent's academic background impacts their involvement in the IEP process, 73% of the respondents 79% of the respondents felt that active parental involvement encourages the IEP team to explore options for students success.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

This study should be replicated with a larger population of teachers, paraprofessionals, school counselors, and administrators before the results could be generalized to teachers, paraprofessionals, school counselors, and administrators outside School X. The attitudes and perceptions the sample group felt towards parental involvement in the IEP process ranged from having positive feeling about the process to expressing no opinions at all. The data collected from the survey indicated that overall the teachers, paraprofessionals, school counselor, and administrators displayed varying opinions of the IEP process and parental involvement.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended to future researchers who might like to replicate this study, that a larger sample of teachers, paraprofessionals, school counselor, and administrators be used for valid results. It is also recommended that the researcher-designed survey be field- tested to valid the survey items. With a researcher-designed survey, certain biases are reflected in the survey items, but if field -tested, those items which do not seek the type of results needed can be limited.

It is also recommended for further study that the study should include more schools from larger school districts. The demographics of the study could be broadened to include urban and metropolitan districts. Another recommendation would be to increase the size of your sample. A final recommendation for future study is to replicate this study after the sample has gone through training and staff development in the IEP process and parental involvement.



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## Appendix A

### Survey

Please answer question to the best of your knowledge. This survey is designed to provide schools with data useful for providing useful offering in the IEP process.

- Answer the questions based on your experience involving the IEP process.

All responses are anonymous and confidential. A few questions ask for personal information, such as work you do at the school, how long you have done it, and your race/ethnicity. But the survey reports provided your district contain only percentages for all respondents combined.

1. What is your role at the school? (Mark all that apply)
  - A. General education teacher
  - B. Special education teacher
  - C. Counselor
  - D. Psychologist
  - E. Paraprofessional
  - F. Teacher assistance
  - G. School administrator
2. How many years have you worked at your current position?
  - A. 1-2
  - B. 3-5
  - C. 6-10
  - D. Over ten years
3. How long have you been working in the IEP process and attending IEP meetings?
  - A. 1-2
  - B. 3-5
  - C. 6-10
  - D. Over ten years
4. In an average school year about how many IEP meeting do you attend?
  - A. 1-5
  - B. 6-10
  - C. 11-15
  - D. 16-20
  - E. Over 20
5. What is your race or ethnicity
  - A. African American (Not Hispanic)
  - B. American Indian or Alaska Native
  - C. Asian or Pacific Islander
  - D. White, not Hispanic
  - E. Hispanic or Latino
  - F. Other or Multi-ethnic

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
1. Parents possess little knowledge about the IEP process.					
2. Parents do not keep up with their children education.					
3. Parents have difficulty with the understanding of their role in their children's education.					
4. Parents do not understand the language used during the IEP process.					
5. Teacher and parents' relationship can have an impact on the IEP process.					
6. Inexperienced teachers have a negative perception of difficult parents.					
7. Proper training of new teacher on how to deal with difficult parents can lead to a better perception of the difficult parent.					
8. The IEP team should include tenure highly qualified teachers.					
9. Active parents in the IEP school are more active during the IEP meeting.					

10. IEP staff will welcome active involvement from parents in the IEP meeting.					
11. Inexperience parents in the IEP process show more opposition towards the IEP staff.					
12. Tenure highly qualified teachers involved in the IEP process ensures the success of the student.					