Teacher Perspectives on Information Sharing and Parent Knowledge of Special Education

Jennifer Farley, Jacqueline Huscroft-D'Angelo, Kristin Duppong Hurley, A. Angelique, Aitkenand Alexandra L. Trout

Abstract: Policy and professional standards shape the way that special education teachers partner with parents. Such partnership is key to engaging parents in the process of special education and can serve as the foundation for collaboration and information sharing. Although the literature describes recommendations for how teachers can provide information to parents, few studies examine what information teachers provide. The purpose of this exploratory study was to investigate how teachers perceive school information sharing and parents' knowledge relative to special education. To understand these perspectives, we developed and piloted the Parent Knowledge and Resources in Special Education – Teacher Version survey, with a group of 142 special education teachers. Results indicated that 67.6% of teachers perceived parents to be satisfied or very satisfied with the special education information received from schools. However, teachers had varied perspectives on how well parents understand special education, and the majority (56%) did not feel resources and supports to help parents better understand special education exist. Teachers perceived that schools most frequently encouraged parents to access information through conversations with teachers (75.9%), conversations with school administrators (44.4%), and paper handouts provided by the school (41.9%). Teachers also reported that how well school districts provided information varied by special education topic. We also identify implications of the study results and areas for future research.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; 2004) provides guidelines for the administration of special education services and informs the duties of special education teachers. These responsibilities are complex and extend throughout the special education process, starting with student evaluation and ending with transition from school, requiring an expansive knowledge and resource base. Integral to this process is special education teachers' work in partnership with parents, a cornerstone of IDEA. Beyond this, the role and responsibilities of the special education teacher – in general and specific to parent partnerships - is also defined by professional organizations. For example, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), emphasizes family involvement in the Special Education Professional Ethical Principles (CEC, 2015). However, policy and professional standards do not stand alone in shaping the duties of exceptional educators relative to parents. The literature includes numerous studies that explore these partnerships and describe informational resources (Burke, 2012; Foster & Cue, 2008; Schultz et al., 2016), communication (Applequist, 2009; Azad et al., 2018; Dardig, 2005; Vanden-Kiernan & McManus, 2005), parental engagement (Bettini et al., 2019; Cheatham & Ostrosky, 2013; Kasper, 2009), and considerations for culturally and linguistically diverse parents (Lo, 2012; Wenner Conroy, 2012).

Parental involvement in school is strongly associated with positive academic achievement and school outcomes (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2005). Several theoretical frameworks of parental involvement include broad domains such as home-based, school-based, and academic socialization; special education teachers have the opportunity to significantly impact parent roles with school-based parental involvement (Green et

al., 2007; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). For example, existing literature emphasizes the importance special education teacher and parent collaborations, working relationships, and consistent communication (Collier et al., 2015; Edwards & Da Fonte, 2012; Whitbred et al., 2007). Research also calls for advancing teachers' role beyond that of a partner, to act as parent guides through the special education process. Kalyanpur and Harry (2004) suggested the responsibility of special education professionals is to support parent acquisition of special education knowledge and navigational skills by proactively providing parents with information. However, limited literature exists specifically focused on how parents access information about special education topics, and the role of teachers in providing such information. Before teachers can fully realize their role as parent guides through the special education process, there is a need to better understand how teachers present special education information to parents and support parents in acquiring knowledge.

Special education is complex, and few studies have examined what information teachers provide to parents about it. Foster and Cue (2008) explored the job duties of teachers of deaf students and found that they provided parents with information about disabilities, educational options, services, and student progress. Trainor (2011) conducted focus groups with 17 special education teachers and found that, overall, they were willing to support parents' understanding of special education policies, resources, and services but expressed concerns about connecting parents to advocacy groups. For parents of students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), teachers provided information to parents during conferences but also reported that parents were searching for information and resources on their own to aid

their understanding (Schultz et al., 2016). Overall, information supplied by teachers is key to parents' development of an understanding of special education, which in turn, serves as the foundation for parental engagement in their child's education (Burke, 2012). Considering parents of students receiving special education services identify teachers as their preferred source of special education information (Huscroft-D'Angelo et al., 2019), it is necessary to better understand the specific content of information provided by teachers, as well as the ways that they provide it.

Azad and colleagues (2018) asserted that special education teachers are concerned about parent communication and frustrated by what they perceive to be the only methods of communication available to them: written and face-to-face. There are limited studies specific to the methods teachers use to provide such information and the available research focuses almost solely on recommendations. According to the literature, teachers should provide parents information about special education in multiple formats, including print, video, internet, and presentations (Salend, 2006). Teachers may provide internet, or web-based resources, through letters, brochures, or websites (Applequist, 2009; Dardig, 2005). In-person approaches, such as teacher or guest presentations, give parents the opportunity to participate in discussions, which may further enhance their learning (Salend, 2006). Furthermore, when providing parents with formal special education paperwork, inclusion of supplemental materials may offer additional explanation (Pogoloff, 2004).

Given both parents' preference for receiving information from teachers and the myriad of ways researchers recommend that teachers provide information to parents, the role of teachers in informing parents is clearly paramount. Although researchers suggest that parents seek advice and information about special education from teachers (Cheatham & Ostrosky, 2011; 2013; Huscroft-D'Angelo et al., 2019), it unknown how these requests for information and advice are related to parents' knowledge of the special education process. There is a need for more research that directly examines parents' knowledge of special education, and teacher's perceptions of their role in building this knowledge. Overall, given the importance of parental involvement in special education (Burke & Hodapp, 2016), there is a need to close the gap between the recommendations for teacher-parent communication in the literature and teacher practices specific to information sharing. The first step in closing this gap, which serves as the purpose of this study, is to expand the research by documenting teacher perspectives on the information schools share with parents of children receiving special education services. This includes examination of both topics and methods of information sharing. This study also explores teacher perspectives of parents' overall knowledge of special education, including their most frequent questions and the resources that support their understanding of special education.

METHODS

The research team conducted an exploratory study through survey research (Ponto, 2015) to better understand teacher's perspectives of information sharing with parents. The existing literature specific to teacher roles and recommendations for sharing information informed the development of a survey, The Parent Knowledge and Resources in Special Education – Teacher Version, which the research team piloted. Participants included teachers providing special education services to students in school settings (e.g., early childhood through high school), located in 16 different states. The survey provided a low-cost and efficient option to collect data from a large number of current special educators across a breadth of topics related to parent knowledge and resources. The study was exploratory, as it was unclear how the recommendations in the literature were practiced in the field, so it was important to ask teachers about all these options for information content and sharing methods. Finally, the use of an on-line survey allowed for the collection of data from a large number of teachers located across the United States.

Measures

A process developed and used previously in the creation of surveys for parents (Huscroft-D'Angelo et al., 2019; Huscroft-D'Angelo et al., 2013; Trout et al., 2014) and administrators (Aitken et al., 2019) was employed by the research team to develop The Parent Knowledge and Resources in Special Education – Teacher Version survey. First, the team reviewed the literature specific to information sharing and parents' knowledge of special education. Next, the team brainstormed survey items regarding the content and methods of teacher communication with parents of students receiving special education services. Then, the team drafted the survey instrument and refined it through an iterative process of review by colleagues (i.e., researchers, professors, school district leaders) from the disciplines of special education, general education, and education research. We then tested the revised survey with a group of current special educators who provided feedback to the team, which informed additional revisions to the survey. The final survey included four domains, (i.e., Teachers Locating Resources Independently; Parent Perspectives on Resources/Supports to Gain Knowledge of Special Education; Parent Knowledge of Special Education Processes and Practices; Parent Training on Special Education) with 102 content items and seven demographic items. This exploratory study focused on two of the survey domains related to teacher perceptions of parental access to special education topics and knowledge of special education (Parent Perspectives on Resources/Supports to Gain Knowledge of Special Education and Parent Knowledge of Special Education Processes and Practices).

The Parent Perspectives on Resources/Supports

to Gain Knowledge of Special Education included 19 items that identified teacher views of parents' satisfaction and understanding of special education, as well as their school's encouragement of parents in accessing sources of information (e.g., conversations, paper handouts, or websites). First, teachers rated their perceptions of parents' overall satisfaction with the information provided by the school (very satisfied, satisfied, neither satisfied nor unsatisfied, unsatisfied, very unsatisfied) and current understanding of special education (excellent understanding, good understanding, adequate, poor understanding, not well at all). Next, teachers identified the question that parents most frequently ask them related to special education (open-ended, text response). Then, teachers provided information about how frequently (never, sometimes, most of the time, always, I don't know) their school encouraged parents to use 13 different sources of information about special education. These sources included into three types: (a) conversations (e.g., conversations with special education teachers, conversations with other parents, conversations with parent support agency staff; seven items), (b) handouts (i.e., paper handouts; one item), and (c) websites (e.g., school district website, state department of education website; five items). An open-ended item followed that asked teachers if there were any other sources that provide parents with information (open-ended, text response). Finally, teachers responded to two items on resource availability. The first item asked if resources and supports to better understand special education were readily available to parents (yes, no). The second item asked whether the teacher had found any specific resources that were helpful in informing parents about special education (yes, no). If so, teachers described the resource (open ended, text response).

The Parent Knowledge of Special Education Processes and Practices domain included 17 items in which teachers shared details regarding the type of information their school provides to parents and how well the school provides this information. First, teachers completed 14 items related to how well (poor, acceptable, good, excellent, or I don't know) they felt their district shares information with parents on specific special education topics (e.g., how special education services work, individualized education plans, classroom placement options). Items fell three topical categories, that included (a) rights (e.g., legal rights of the parent, legal rights of the child; three items), (b) individualized education programs (IEP; e.g., individualized education programs, how often IEP meetings will occur; eight items), (c) communication (e.g., how parents can advocate for their child; three items). Next, teachers reported information on any other topics on which their school provides information to parents. Finally, teachers identified topics on

which they wish they had better information to share with parents (e.g., how special education services work, evaluation, IEPs; 12 response options). Additionally, the survey included seven demographic items regarding teacher gender, certification, level of education, grade level taught, years of experience, and zip code of their school building.

Procedures

The University's Institutional Review Board approved procedures for the study. Partnerships with school districts and university education departments facilitated participant recruitment. Initially, research team members sent an email and recruitment flyer with study information to partner organizations, which included school districts, associations for special education teachers, an education non-profit organization, and graduate programs. Partner agencies, located in multiple states, then had the option to share the information with potential participants. These partner organizations used email, social media posts (e.g., Facebook), and printed flyers to notify special education teachers of their eligibility to participate in the survey. However, participating teachers may have also shared the information they received with others (e.g., sharing a Facebook post on their personal Facebook page, forwarding the email or recruitment flyer). In notifications, partner agencies provided eligible special education teachers with information about the purpose of the study as well as a link to the anonymous on-line survey. The identity of both the survey participant and the partner agency that recruited them was unknown to the research team. Participants provided informed consent electronically prior to completing survey items. A total of 212 teachers provided consent and 162 met the eligibility criteria (current special education teacher). At the end of the survey, participants could receive a $10 gift card as a stipend for their time.

Data Analysis

After survey administration was complete, the team exported all data from the online survey system (Qualtrics) into IBM SPSS Statistics 24. Review of the data identified 20 surveys for which the number of items completed was less than 80% of all survey items. The research team excluded these surveys from analysis and analyzed data for the final sample of 142 participants. The research team coded open-ended responses to identify themes and calculated descriptive statistics for all quantitative items.

RESULTS
Population

A total of 142 participants met inclusion criteria and completed at least 80% of the survey. The majority were female (93%) who held dual certifications in general and special education (62%) and had completed a master's degree (61.3%). Participants' teaching experience varied; 43% reported five or fewer years of experience, 17.6% re-

ported teaching between 6-9 years, and 39.4% reported teaching 10 or more years. Participants taught all grades (early childhood to high school) and 64% reported teaching multiple grades. Nearly half taught grades K-5 (49.3%), while 31.7% of participants taught in early childhood settings, 27.5% taught grades 6-8, and 21.8% taught in grades 9-12. Participants reported teaching in school buildings located in 16 states, representing all geographic regions of the United States. An analysis of zip codes indicated that 52% of participants were teachers at a school located in an urban area, as defined by National Center for Education Statistics.

Supporting Parent Knowledge of Special Education

Overall, teachers perceived parents were satisfied (52.8%) or very satisfied (14.8%) with the special education information provided by the school. While 21.8% of teachers indicated that parents were neither satisfied nor unsatisfied, only around 10% of teachers reported parents were unsatisfied (7.7%) or very unsatisfied (2.8%). Despite high levels of satisfaction, teachers expressed varied perspectives of parent understanding of special education. Most teachers indicated that parents had an adequate (40.8%), good (21.1%), or excellent (0.7%), understanding of how special education services work, while 32.4% of teachers reported parents had a poor understanding and 4.9% revealed that parent did not understand at all how special education services worked.

Participants identified what question parents most frequently asked them about special education and the research team coded responses into 13 broad themes (see Figure 1). The most frequently identified questions were related to services and accommodations (n = 31), and included items related to "how to get more services" and "test accommodations." Questions were also frequently related to eligibility (n = 16; e.g., "How do I get my child evaluated?", "Why is my child in special education?", "When will my child leave special education?"), transitions (n = 15; e.g., "What will happen to my child when they become adults?" "What does Kindergarten look like for my child?"), and academic progress or skills (n = 14; e.g., "How is my child failing?" "How can we improve their grades?").

Teachers also shared how frequently they believe their school encouraged parents to access specific sources of information about special education. Results revealed that conversations with school staff were most frequently encouraged (see Table 1). This included teachers who shared that their schools encouraged conversations with teachers always (38.3%) or most of the time (37.6%). Teachers perceived the encouragement of parental conversations with school administrators always (25.9%) or most of the time (18.5%). Teachers also shared that the school encouraged parents to use the paper handouts provided always (25.0%) or most of the time (16.9%). Between 60% and 80% of teachers shared that their school sometimes, most of the time, or always, encouraged the use of the school building website (60.4%), school district website (72.4%), local parent support agency website (73.9%), state

department of education website (75.6%), and regional or national websites (80.2%) for families of students receiving special education services. However, results revealed websites to be among the resources teachers perceived parents to be least frequently encouraged to use, to learn about special education, when compared to other informational resources.

Though teachers perceived that their schools encouraged parents to use several sources of information, they also felt that such resources were not easily accessible. When asked if they believed that resources and supports to better understand special education services are readily available to parents, 56.0% of survey participants responded no. Furthermore, 55.3% of teachers reported that they had not found any specific resources to be particularly helpful for informing parents about the special education process. Of the 44.7% of teachers (n = 63) that responded they had identified helpful resources, 79% (n = 50) provided a written description of the resource. The research team coded these descriptions, by resource type, and assessed the total number of references for each code. Most frequently, teachers referenced websites (n = 34), the most popular of which was Wright's Law (www.wrightslaw.com). Additional websites referenced multiple times included state department of education websites (n = 4), federal websites (n = 3; e.g., idea.gov), and understood.org (n = 3). Other references included websites for specific organizations, specific disabilities, and schools. After websites, teachers identified organizations as a type of resource (n = 13), of which parent centers were most frequently referenced (n = 8). The remaining resources included paper books and handouts (n = 7), other online resources (n = 4; e.g., blogs, forums, Facebook groups), and people (n = 4; e.g., special education director, school staff).

Parent Knowledge of Special Education Processes and Practices

Teachers also described how well their school districts shared information with parents on specific special education topics (see Table 2). Teachers perceived their district did an excellent (45.1%) or good (28.2%) job providing information related to how often IEP meetings will occur, the highest rated topic overall. Regarding communication, teachers reported that their school did an excellent (35.9%) or good (31.7%) job providing information about how parents can best communicate with the school. Just under half of teachers reported their district did a good (29.6%) or excellent (18.3%) job providing information about advocacy. Rights-related topics varied regarding how well school districts provided information. Over 50% of teachers indicated that their district did a good or excellent job providing information regarding the legal rights of the parent and the legal rights of the child. However, only 37.4% indicated they did a good or excellent job providing information on the resolution of disagreements between parents and the school. When compared to all topics, the largest proportion of teachers rated this item as poor (20.4%) or

acceptable (36.6%).

Finally, teachers identified which topics they wished they had better information to share with parents (see Figure 2). Of the twelve options provided (of which teachers could choose all that applied), over half of teachers expressed they would like better information related to how parents can advocate for their child (63.4%) and how special education services work (54.9%). The options selected by the fewest teachers were specific to components of the IEP, including how schools notify parents of changes in the IEP (12.0%), the people attending the IEP meeting (8.5%), and how often IEP meetings occurred (7.0%).

DISCUSSION

Research clearly illustrates the positive relationship between parent involvement in school and student success. For the parents of students in special education, such involvement is dependent on their understanding of programs and services, which can be influenced by teachers' partnership and communication. This study was one of the first to document teacher perspectives of parents' knowledge of special education and how schools provide informational resources about special education to parents. Results indicated teachers perceived schools to encourage parents to access several informational resources specific to special education but most frequently, they perceived schools to encourage parents to obtain information from special education teachers. This aligns with parental preferences for receiving information from teachers (Huscroft-D'Angelo et al., 2019). In addition to receiving information from teachers, results revealed that schools frequently gave parents paper resources (i.e., handouts, pamphlets), and less often provided parents with web-based resources.

While schools did not frequently encourage parents to access special education information through websites, as compared to other sources of information, web-based resources made up the majority of resources teachers identified as helpful to share with parents. It is unclear, though, how teachers identify and select these web-based resources. It may be the case that teachers spend time curating their own list of helpful resources, such as the ones reported in this survey, but it is unknown if teachers share these recommendations more broadly with other teachers or school officials. Furthermore, while the literature recommends the provision of web-based resources to parents (Applequist, 2009; Dardig, 2005), methods for identifying these resources and assessing quality are not specified. Given the quantity of information available on the internet, the process of locating and reviewing high quality resources is likely time-consuming for teachers. Such efforts may end up being duplicated by other teachers in a building or district. Furthermore, parents also search for special education information on their own (Schultz, 2016), and may spend time reviewing the same resources as teachers. Efforts to better understand the components of high-quality web-based resources specific to special

education and to disseminate these resources to special educators and parents may minimize duplicated efforts to locate informational resources while also ensuring parents' access to the high-quality information to which they access throughout the special education process.

In terms of how well schools provide information to parents, teachers perceived that schools did a good job providing IEP information. This is key, given parents' role on the IEP team and participation in IEP meetings (Burke, 2012). However, according to teachers, schools were less likely to do an excellent job of providing resources specific to parental rights and how to resolve disagreements with the school. This difference suggests that schools may use varying methods for sharing information on each of these topics. Expansion of the methods used to share information relative to the IEP, such as portfolios (Gregg et al., 2011) or web- and app-based systems (Englund, 2009), may assist in providing information on other special education topics. However, it should be noted that information on parental rights and dispute resolution is part of the paperwork schools are required to share with families associated with special education (e.g., prior written notice, parental rights). These complex legal documents may be difficult for parents to understand without supplemental explanatory information (Pogoloff, 2004). Therefore, teacher perceptions may indicate that to do a "excellent job," schools must go beyond simply providing the paperwork and IEP team members must make additional efforts to explain these topics to parents. Given this, resources specific to facilitating partnerships and communication may be helpful to IEP team members (Collier et al., 2015; Whitbred et al., 2007). However, within the time constraints of the IEP meeting, team members are already tasked with providing parents with a tremendous amount of information. Therefore, other methods may be employed to improve parents' understanding, such as discussions during teacher presentations and group meetings with parents (Salend, 2006). Schools may also want to explore other innovations that equip parents with special education information, like parent-to-parent support interventions that connect experienced parents with current parents of youth receiving special education services (Duppong Hurley et al., 2020; Kutash et al., 2011) to complement the efforts of special education teachers.

Survey results also indicated that teachers perceived the need for better informational resources on specific topics in special education. Over half of teachers reported they would like resources specific to advocacy and how special education services work. This corresponds to the need for advocacy-specific resources identified by parents (Huscroft-D'Angelo et al., 2019) but is inconsistent with research documenting teacher concern regarding advocacy organizations (Trainor, 2011). In terms of how special education services work, the topic is broad, and it is unclear if teachers believe parents need guidance with a general overview or a better understanding of specific aspects of special education

services, depending on the needs of the family and stage in the special education process. Taken together, these findings suggest the need for development of additional resources and increased accessibility of existing resources.

Limitations

Though this study reveals new information regarding teacher perceptions of information sharing and parent knowledge, there are several limitations. First, this study used The Parent Knowledge and Resources in Special Education – Teacher Version survey to gather information from teachers. Therefore, results are limited to teachers' perceptions of parents and did not include parent input. This survey also needs psychometric research to ensure validity and reliability. Further, it may be necessary to revise and expand items to include other methods of interacting with families, such as learning communities (Murray & Mereoiu, 2016) and use of portfolios (Gregg et al., 2011). Second, convenience sampling identified participants, so it is possible that our sampling approach only reached certain types of special education teachers. Replication of this study with additional samples is necessary to see if results are generalizable to a larger population of special education teachers.

Implications for Practice

Given the importance of parent engagement in special education (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2005), and the key role teachers play to facilitate partnerships and provide informational resources to inform that engagement (Burke, 2012), the findings of this study may inform teacher supports and future research. Teachers identified a lack of resources to support parent understanding of special education and only about a third of teachers surveyed provided details regarding the resources they find helpful to share with parents. Teachers may benefit from building-, district-, or even state-level supports that allow for the identification and sharing of high-quality resources with parents. Yet, the literature does not identify such supports for resource sharing; professional development may help teachers to identify and create such resources. Learning communities may also promote sharing of resources between teaching teams within buildings and school districts. Additionally, both teachers and parents may benefit from learning about special education together. Models, such as the Teacher-Parent Partnership Model (TPPM; Murray & Mereoiu, 2016), provide a platform within a learning community for enhanced communication, sharing of resources, and joint training and decision-making. Finally, engaging parents in pre-service teacher training, such as in the Family as Faculty program, has been effective in supporting teachers' partnership skills and increased awareness of parental knowledge of the IEP process (Collier et al., 2015; Patterson et al., 2009).

However, for such professional development and resource-sharing efforts to be effective, there is a need for additional research specific to the content and method of providing information to parents. Future research must identify the content of informational resources that best supports parent understanding of services. Teachers expressed interest in additional resources about how special education works; yet, this topic is broad. This may reflect a need for parents to obtain a general overview of the special education process, especially after identification of their child. Such resources would need to be both comprehensive and easy for parents to understand and the field needs additional research to inform the balance between these priorities.

Future research will also increase understanding of the best way to present parents with information about special education. Given that teachers frequently identified web-based resources as helpful to parents, yet perceived that schools did not frequently provide these types of resources, research must examine how web-based information can help build parents' knowledge of special education. Perhaps schools could share other resources in the same manner they share information about the IEP, as teachers perceived schools did a good job providing this information to parents. Yet, additional research is necessary to fully understand the way in which IEP information is provided to parents, and how these methods of information sharing are similar to or different from how information on other special education topics is provided.

Finally, future research should continue to explore teacher perspectives on what parents know, and have yet to learn, about special education. This includes developing a better understanding for the content and method for sharing information that supports parents' understanding. Such research should also explore what type or amount of special education knowledge parents need to fully engage in the special education process.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this study documented teacher perspectives on the types of information schools provide to parents about special education and methods of information sharing. Results detail the ways in which parents may build an understanding of special education processes and services, as well as teachers' perspectives of parents' knowledge. Yet, the field needs additional research to fully understand this transfer of information and how it supports parents' understanding of special education processes and services. Supporting teachers to continue to provide high quality and relevant information to parents is a promising strategy to improving parental knowledge of special education, with the ultimate goal of improving services for students throughout the nation.

REFERENCES

Applequist, K.L. (2009). Parent perspectives of special education: Framing of experiences for prospective special educators. Rural Special

Education Quarterly, 28(2), 3-16. https://doi.org/10.1177/875687050902800202

Aitken, A. A., Farley, J., Huscroft-D'Angelo, J., Trout, A., & Duppong Hurley, K. (2019, April). School administrators' perceptions of parent's knowledge of special education. Poster presentation at American Educational Researcher Association Conference, Toronto, ON.

Azad, G., Benjamin Wolk, C., & Mandell, D.S. (2018). Ideal interactions: Perspectives of parents and teachers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. School Community Journal, 28(2), 63-84. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1201931.pdf

Bettini, E., Wang, J., Cumming, M., Kimerling, J., & Schutz, S. (2019). Special educators' experiences of roles and responsibilities in self-contained classes for students with emotional/behavioral disorders. Remedial and Special Education, 40(3), 177-191. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932518762470

Burke, M. (2012). Examining family involvement in regular and special education: Lessons to be learned for both sides. International Review of Research in Developmental Disabilities, 43, 187-218. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-398261-2.00005-2

Burke, M., & Hodapp, R. (2016). The nature, correlates, and conditions of parental advocacy in special education. Exceptionality, 24(3), 137-150.

Cheatham, G.A. & Ostrosky, M.A. (2013). Goal setting during early childhood parent-teacher conferences: A comparison of three groups of parents. Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 27(2), 166-189. https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2013.767291

Collier, M., Keefe, E.B., & Hirrel, L.A. (2015). Preparing special education teachers to collaborate with families. School Community Journal, 25(1), 117-136.

Council for Exceptional Children. (2015). What Every Special Educator Must Know: Professional Ethics and Standards. Arlington, VA: CEC.

Dardig, J.C. (2005). The McClurg monthly magazine and 14 more practical ways to involve parents. TEACHING Exceptional Children, 38(2), 46-51.

Duppong Hurley, K., Duchnowski, A., Kutash, K., & Farley, J. (2020). Peer to peer support: Innovative strategies for families of youth with emotional/behavioral disorders. In T.W. Farmer, M. Conroy, K., Sutherland, & E.M.Z. Farmer (Eds.), Handbook of research on emotional & behavioral disorders: Interdisciplinary developmental perspectives on children and youth (p. 69-110). Routledge, New York, NY.

Edwards, C.C. & Da Fonte, A. (2012). The 5-Point Plan: Fostering successful partnerships with families of students with disabilities. TEACHING Exceptional Children, 44(3), :6-13. doi:10.1177/004005991204400301

Englund, L. (2009). Designing a web site to share information with parents. Intervention in School and Clinic, 45(1), 45-51. https://doi.org/10.1177/1053451208327263

Foster, S. & Cue, K. (2008). Roles and responsibilities of itinerant specialist teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students. American Annals of the Deaf, 153(5), 436-449. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26234551

Green, C.L., Walker, J.M.T., Hoover-Dempsey, K.V., & Sandler, H.M. (2007). Parents' motivations for involvement in children's education: An empirical test of a theoretical model of parent involvement. Journal of Educational Psychology, 99(3), 532-544. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.99.3.532

Gregg, K., Rugg, M., & Souto-Manning, M. (2011). Fostering family-centered practices through a family-created portfolio. The School Community Journal, 21(1), 53-70. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ932200.pdf

Hill, N. E., & Tyson, D. F. (2009). Parental involvement in middle school: A meta-analytic assessment of the strategies that promote achievement. Developmental Psychology, 45, 740–763. doi:10.1037/a0015362

Hoover-Dempsey, K.V., Walker, J.M.T., Sandler, H.M., Whetsel, D., Green, C.L., Wilkins, A.S., & Closson, K. (2005). Why do parents become involved? Research findings and implications. The Elementary School Journal, 106(2), 105-130. https://doi.org/10.1086/499194

Huscroft-D'Angelo, J., Farley, J., Trout, A.L., & Duppong Hurley, K. (2019, January). Parental involvement in special education: Understanding parent knowledge, training, and access to resources. Presentation at the Annual Council for Exceptional Children Conference, Indianapolis, IN.

Huscroft-D'Angelo, J., Trout, A., Epstein, M., Duppong-Hurley, K., & Thompson, R. (2013). Gender differences in perceptions of aftercare supports and services. Children and Youth Services Review, 35(5), 916-922. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2013.01.024

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 (2004).

Jeynes, W. H. (2005). A meta-analysis of the relation of parental involvement to urban elementary school student academic achievement. Urban Education, 40(3), 237-269. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085905274540Kalyanpur, M. & Harry, B. (2004). Impact of the social construction of LD on culturally diverse families: A response to Reid and Valle. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 37(6), 530-533. https://doi.org/10.1177/00222194040370060801

Kasper, M. (2019). If you feed them, they will come: Increasing parental involvement in a special education setting through commensality. International Journal for Professional Educators, 85, 25-41. https://www.dkgnj.org/uploads/2/2/3/1/22313516/2019_jour_85-3.pdf#page=25

Kalyanpur, M., & Harry, B. (2004). Impact of the social construction of LD on culturally diverse families: A response to Reid and Valle. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 37(6), 530-533. https://doi.org/10.1177/0

0222194040370060801

Kutash, K., Duchnowski, A.J., Green, A.L., & Ferron, J. (2011). Supporting parents who have youth with emotional disturbances through a parent-to-parent support program: A proof of concept study using random assignment. Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research, 38, 412-427. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-010-0329-5

Lo, L. (2012). Demystifying the IEP process for diverse parents of children with disabilities. Teaching Exceptional Children, 44(3), 14-20. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/004005991204400302?casa_token=RCGN_e_2b00AAAAA:LudYmxhfN2RzZVKD4JVtcmjvTZMxW-Cvuj_Oz8B6dX_ZHJ2dniMrdoTkSuqi-sTuXuh9NwvHMQBN

Murray, M. & Mereoiu, M. (2016). Teacher-parent partnership: An authentic teacher education model to improve student outcomes. Journal of Further and Higher Education, 40(2), 276-292. https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2014.971108

Patterson, K.B., Webb, K.W., & Krudwig, K.M. (2009). Family as faculty parents: Influence on teachers' beliefs about family partnerships. Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth, 54(1), 41-50. https://doi.org/10.3200/PSFL.54.1.41-50

Ponto J. (2015). Understanding and evaluating survey research. Journal of the Advanced Practitioner in Oncology, 6(2), 168–171. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4601897/

Pogoloff, S.M. (2004). Facilitate positive relationships between parents and professionals. Intervention in School and Clinic, 40(2), 116-119. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/10534512040400020801?casa_token=k-Y2bOMenJsAAAAA:q6WPtKpEpwMJnFvBa19DJNaTXtC3cFA8AUYDcZaJO1_wr97vcVZmQmTeBI7Y1gSHbmJafTjlZ1Bv

Salend, S.J. (2006). Explaining your inclusion program to families. TEACHING Exceptional Children, 38(4), 6-11. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/004005990603800401?casa_token=8k81nfatk64AAAAA:mp5qfMwIrBWMWngK7N6Snyi5iXDZ4ADRjE-T-O1BpYSqLhj8UvbAWopl6jMyxsY538dc7vJwYV6q

Schultz, T.R., Able, H., Sreckovic, M.A., & White, T. (2016). Parent-teacher collaboration: Teacher perceptions of what is needed to support students with ASD in the inclusive classroom. Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities, 51(4), 344-354. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26173862

Trainor, A.A. (2011). Educators' expectations of parent participation: The role of cultural and social capital. Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional learners, 12(2), 33-50. https://doi.org/10.5555/muvo.12.2.01x3497585xtw067

Trout, A. L., Huscroft-D'Angelo, J., Epstein, M., & Kavan, J. (2014). Identifying aftercare supports for out-of-home transitions: A descriptive analysis of youth perceptions and preparedness. Journal of At-Risk Issues, 18, 11-18. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1029750.pdf

Vaden-Kiernan, N., and McManus, J. (2005). Parent and Family Involvement in Education: 2002–03 (NCES 2005–043). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED485638.pdf

Wenner Conroy, P. (2012). Collaborating with culturally and linguistically diverse families of students in rural schools who receive special education services. Rural Special Education Quarterly, 31(3), 20-24. https://doi.org/10.1177/875687051203100304

Whitbread, K.M., Bruder, M.B., Fleming, G., & Park, H.J. (2007). Collaborations in special education. TEACHING Exceptional Children, 39(4), 6-14.

AUTHORS

Dr. Jennifer Farley, is a Research Manager at the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center. Her work focuses on education and includes research and evaluation projects specific to school culture and climate, family engagement, and diverse learners.

Jacqueline D'Angelo, is an associate research professor in the Academy for Child and Family Wellbeing at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Dr. D'Angelo has over a decade of experience developing and evaluating interventions to improve educational outcomes for students who are at-risk and their families. This work focuses primarily on creating programs that emphasize collaborative approaches among agencies, families, and school systems to systematically address the educational needs of students in out-of-home care settings, with a focus on residential and foster care.

Dr. Kristin Duppong Hurly, is a Research Professor and Co-Director of the Academy for Child and Family Well Being at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Her research is focused on designing and evaluating interventions to support the families of students with emotional and behavioral needs.

Angelique Aitken, is an Assistant Research Professor at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. Her research interests include literacy motivation and interventions for students with high-incidence disabilities.

Alex Trout, is a research professor and co-director of the Academy for Child and Family Wellbeing at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She has extensive experience developing and evaluating family based educational programs for systems involved youths. Her work focuses on developing and sustaining collaborative educational support programs that engage parents/caregivers, youths, agencies, and educational systems.

Table 1

School Encouragement of Parents to Access Sources of Information About Special Education (n = 142)

Source of information	Frequency encouraged			
	Never	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
Conversations				
Conversations with teachers	2.8%	21.3%	37.6%	38.3%
Conversations with school administrators	5.2%	50.4%	18.5%	25.9%
Conferences for parents of children receiving special education services	30.8%	29.3%	16.5%	23.3%
Conversations with the school secretary or office administrator	33.1%	38.5%	14.6%	13.8%
Conversations with other parents at my child's school and in our community	30.0%	36.2%	22.3%	11.5%
Conversations with local parent support agency staff	21.4%	48.4%	19.0%	11.1%
In-person trainings or workshops for parents of students in special education	30.3%	43.2%	18.9%	7.6%
Websites				
School building website	39.6%	34.3%	14.2%	11.9%
School district website	27.6%	44.1%	16.5%	11.8%
Local parent support agency websites	26.2%	47.7%	17.7%	8.5%
Regional or national websites for families of students receiving special education services	19.8%	50.4%	22.9%	6.9%
State Department of Education website	24.4%	52.0%	17.9%	5.7%
Handouts				
Paper handouts provided by the school	11.0%	47.1%	25.0%	16.9%

Table 2

How Well Schools Provided Information to Parents on Special Education Topics
(n = 142)

Topic	How well information was provided				
	Poor	Acceptable	Good	Excellent	I don't know
Rights					
Legal rights of the parent	12.0%	31.0%	33.8%	20.4%	2.8%
Legal rights of the child	14.1%	31.0%	30.3%	20.4%	4.2%
Classroom placement options	18.4%	29.1%	33.3%	15.6%	3.5%
How any disagreements parents have with the school will be resolved	20.4%	36.6%	27.5%	9.9%	5.6%
IEPs					
How often IEP meetings will occur	3.5%	20.4%	28.2%	45.1%	2.8%
IEPs	2.8%	26.1%	33.8%	35.2%	2.1%
The people who can and will attend the IEP meeting	12.0%	22.5%	31.0%	30.3%	4.2%
How parents will be notified about any changes in their child's education or IEP	9.9%	24.6%	33.1%	28.9%	3.5%
How their child would be evaluated to see if they qualify for services	7.0%	25.4%	37.3%	26.8%	3.5%
How their child's progress will be tracked and recorded	15.5%	31.7%	34.5%	16.9%	1.4%
How special education services work	18.3%	29.6%	33.8%	16.2%	2.1%
An explanation of the different disability categories	20.4%	25.4%	35.9%	14.1%	4.2%
Communication					
How parents can best communicate with the school	8.5%	23.2%	31.7%	35.9%	0.7%
How parents can advocate for their child	16.9%	30.3%	29.6%	18.3%	4.9%

Figure 1

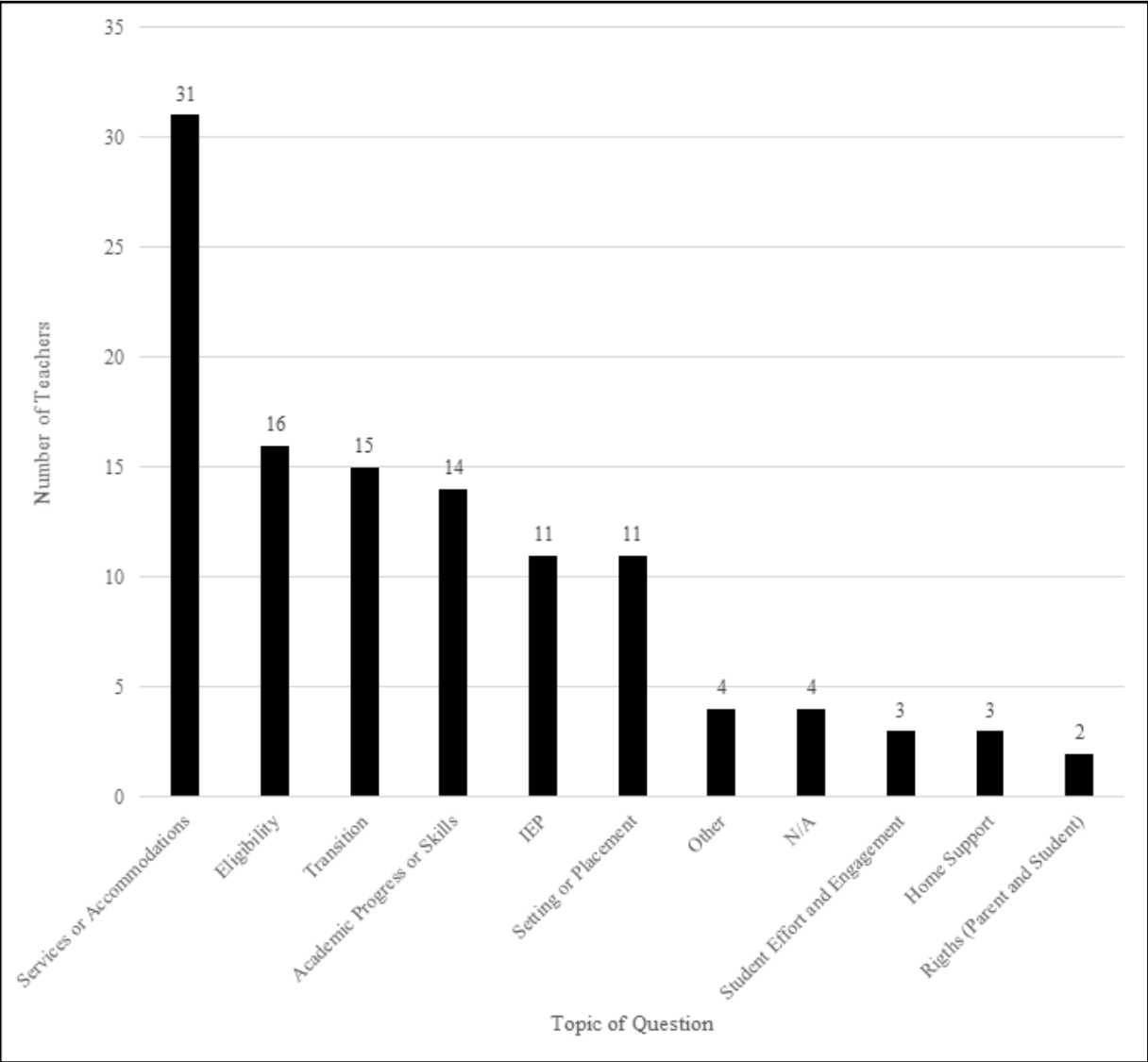*Questions Parents Most Frequently Ask Teachers, by Topic*

Figure 2

Topics on which Teachers Want Better Informational Resources to Provide Parents