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Engaging Parents or Guardians in Meeting the Needs of English Learners with Disabilities

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Abstract

Although considerable research has focused on engaging parents or guardians in education, little research has addressed engaging parents or guardians to meet the needs of English learners (ELs) with disabilities in the United States. In this article, we summarize literature from general education, special education, and EL education to provide strategies for engaging parents or guardians to meet the needs of ELs with disabilities. We discuss the characteristics of ELs with disabilities and their parents, identify barriers to engaging parents of ELs with disabilities, and suggest strategies to help educators and strategies to help parents work toward increased parent engagement.

Engaging Parents or Guardians in Meeting the Needs of English Learners with Disabilities

Research on the topic of engaging parents or guardians in the United States (U.S.) has been conducted for decades. Recent meta-analyses of these studies indicated that parent involvement had a positive effect on student achievement (Castro et al., 2015; Jeynes, 2016, 2017; Ma et al., 2016). Most of the research has focused on the relationship of parent involvement to student academic achievement, yet several studies have explored ways to increase parent or guardian involvement in general (e.g., Curry & Holter, 2019; Herman & Reinke, 2017; Otto & Karbach, 2019; Santana et al., 2019).

A considerable amount of literature addresses parent or guardian participation in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) decision-making process for their children with disabilities (e.g., Underwood, 2010). It is generally agreed that it is essential for all parents or guardians to participate in educational decision making for their children with disabilities (e.g., Goldman & Burke, 2016; Understood, 2019). This literature does not specifically address ELs with disabilities. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) states that parent participation in planning the IEP is expected. All parents have rights, whether "fluent" English speakers or not. Thus, engaging parents whose first language is not English is an important focus for educators.

Research has addressed ways parents or guardians of English learners (ELs) can be involved in their child's educational experience (Vera et al., 2012) but often does not address ELs with disabilities. In practice, this work tends to focus on larger home-school issues such as a positive home learning environment or volunteering at school. Best practices in providing ELs with accessible grade-level instructional content emphasize the role parents or guardians have to play in making decisions about beneficial supports for an individual child (Lazarus et al., 2021).

A lack of attention and research on parents of ELs with disabilities may be related, in part, to the fact that ELs with disabilities are served through two separate systems: EL education and special education. These systems are often silos in the education system. The lack of attention may also be due to differences in the strength of the laws enacted for the two groups of students. Special education services, provided through IDEA and other laws, historically have been viewed as protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities (Lee, 2019), whereas attention to the provision of services for ELs only relatively recently has been included in accountability provisions of federal education laws (Hakuta & Pompa, 2017).

To engage parents or guardians of ELs with disabilities in educational decision-making, it is important to cultivate and build trusting relationships with them. This entails reaching out to parents to know them, their child, and home culture. It is also an opportunity for parents to know how to relate to the teacher and be part of students' success. Building such relationships between teachers and parents will help to disrupt biases that may exist in the dominant culture. This approach helps parents feel acknowledged as part of the child's success in school and outside of school. When parents feel valued and included in the child's education planning and decision-making process, the resulting decisions improve instruction and assessment outcomes for the child (Koran & Kopriva, 2017). Students with disabilities stand a better chance of success when attention is paid to the resources that parents or guardians offer in terms of their cultural, social, and human capital (Bourdieu, 1992).

The purpose of this article is to bring together literature across general education, special education, and EL education on the topic of engaging parents or guardians in meeting the needs of ELs with disabilities. We do this by: a) discussing the characteristics of ELs with disabilities and their parents or guardians in the U.S.; b) identifying barriers to engaging parents or guardians of ELs with disabilities; c) documenting strategies for helping educators learn about and engage parents or guardians; and d) noting strategies for helping parents or guardians learn about and work as active partners with educators. We conclude with suggestions for creating partnerships to meet the needs of ELs with disabilities. For ease of reference, we will use the term *parent* to include a child's guardian or other adults who makes decisions for the child.

ELs with Disabilities

There is little public information on the characteristics of parents of ELs with disabilities. Therefore, understanding parents begins with a clear understanding of who the students are because parents and students share some characteristics.

Identification Procedures

ELs with disabilities are students who have been determined eligible for both English language development services (e.g., English as a second language, bilingual special education, etc.) and special education services. ELs usually are identified through a multi-step process that involves a home language survey and an English proficiency screening test (U.S. Department of Education et al., 2015). Parents' consent for a screening assessment is not required, but parents can decline English language development services for their child even if the screening test indicates the need for services (U.S. Department of Education et al., 2015). In many states, schools are required to create an EL plan that documents the English language development services the child will receive, instructional goals for the child, and any instruction or testing supports the child needs for their developing English skills.

Students in need of special education services also go through identification processes that may include parent interviews, student observations, gathering of student performance or behavioral data, and a variety of assessments. The identification process for most students takes place during their K–12 school years. Parents can decline special education services for their child. When ELs are evaluated for some types of learning-related disabilities, they should be evaluated in both their home language and English (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002) to help rule out second language learning as a factor in difficulties students experience at school.

All students who receive K–12 special education services have an IEP. Parents sign it to indicate their agreement. It spells out the specialized education services the student will receive, any related services, such as speech-language services and interpreting services, and accommodations that the student needs in the classroom or on assessments. A team of educators, parents, and the student, meet regularly to review the IEP and make changes. According to Hoover et al. (2019), the IEP should contain "legislatively mandated features" required by the IDEA 2004 for ELs. It should include a description of language education and culturally and linguistically responsive content instruction (e.g., strategies for building background knowledge, use of two languages during instruction, EL instructional techniques, and use of English proficiency standards) that will help the student to attain academic goals and meet content standards.

Student Characteristics

National estimates of the population of ELs with disabilities who have IEPs typically place the percentage at about 14.2% of ELs (McFarland et al., 2019), or 11% of all students with IEPs (National Center on Educational Outcomes [NCEO], n.d.). Within individual states, the percentage of ELs vary, from as little as 1% to as much as 30% (NCEO).

ELs speak more than 400 languages (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Although Spanish-speakers represent approximately three-fourths of all ELs, sizeable populations of Arabic, Chinese, Vietnamese, English, Somali, Russian, Hmong, Haitian Creole, and Portuguese speakers are present as well. Thus, educators may serve ELs with disabilities from these language groups in larger numbers than students in other language groups. ELs with disabilities most often are identified as having specific learning disability (47%), speech-language impairment (18%; NCEO, n.d.).

Parent Characteristics

The information on English language learners with disabilities gives insight into characteristics of parents. First, parents may speak Spanish, followed by Arabic, Chinese, Vietnamese, and other languages. Second, parents of ELs with disabilities are more concentrated in states with high populations of ELs. The limited U.S. data that describe parents of ELs with disabilities indicate that parents tend to be bilingual (Liu et al., 2017).

Barriers to Engaging Parents of ELs with Disabilities

Little research directly addresses barriers to parent engagement experienced by parents of ELs with disabilities. Literature on immigrant families and families of students with disabilities suggests three categories of barriers: a) researcher-perceived barriers to engaging parents; b) researcher-perceived barriers to teacher engagement of parents; and c) parent-perceived barriers to engagement.

Researcher-Perceived Barriers to Engaging Parents

Some of the barriers to engaging parents from the researcher perspective are: a) lack of effective communication, b) lack of mutual respect; c) mutual distrust; d) inadequate professional skills; e) lack of parity in power dynamics; and f) low socioeconomic status. Burke and Goldman (2019) reported that some parents perceive communication with school authorities as poor or ineffective. Communication needs to be bidirectional (Burke & Goldman, 2019) to avoid any power imbalance (Risko & Walker-Dalhouse, 2009). The assumption that most parents of children with disabilities may not be knowledgeable about anything concerning the child is a deficit model assumption that is stigmatizing (Connor & Cavendish, 2018).

Some studies document a lack of mutual respect between parents and school professionals or administrators (Burke & Goldman, 2018, 2019). Involving parents in conversations by intentionally giving them the opportunity to contribute to the discussion might be the best way to engage them. Some research indicates that parents feel professionals are disrespectful when they arrive late to IEP team meetings (Burke & Goldman, 2019). Mutual distrust is another barrier that has been established in research studies (Rossetti et al., 2018). Parents may not trust that teachers understand the specific situation of their child, due in part to a perception that educators know the child partially and seem unwilling to listen and learn from parents who know the whole child (Crompton, 2017; MacLeod et al., 2017). For ELs with disabilities, it is very important that everyone working with the student, including parents, trust each other. Further, teachers may lack needed professional skills in building relationships and humanizing their profession. One skill area that is especially critical is communication with families.

In many cases there may be unequal power between parties in a school-parent partnership. For example, relationships may be top-down, with parents only on the receiving end. Being offered numerous documents to sign becomes a burden instead of an opportunity to be involved in the child's education. Some parents may not be reading at the level in which documents are written. They may feel lost, overwhelmed, stressed, powerless, and marginalized in the special education system (Pang et al., 2019) because of their lack of parity in power dynamics. A true partnership is entered into by individuals with equal rights and responsibilities, but some parents of ELs with disabilities do not know their rights and responsibilities. The lower socioeconomic status of some parents is a hindrance to effective engagement in any school-family partnership. Some parents of ELs with disabilities in the U.S. work survival jobs (Funfe Tatah Mentan, 2016) just to make ends meet.

Researcher Perceived Barriers to Teacher Engagement of Parents

Research examining teacher perceptions indicates that some teachers seem unprepared to teach students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Soutullo et al., 2016). Some teachers lack the necessary professional skills to engage families (Borup, 2016; Schnee & Bose, 2010), and some see engagement of parents only from the perspective of managing student behavior. Parent support for students at home through love, nurturing, and empathy (Onwughalu, 2011) is essential to students' academic success and should be seen as a resource (Schnee & Bose, 2010). However, Borup (2016) found that teachers believed parents often were obstacles to their student's learning "by being overly engaged in certain types of learning activities" (p. 1).

Parent-Perceived Barriers to Engagement

Research from a parent perspective indicates that most parents do not feel included in the IEP process (Jung, 2011; Mueller & Buckley, 2014). Most parents of ELs with disabilities need assistance digesting the provisions of special education law so that they understand its content and are better engaged in the IEP process. In addition, there is a lack of trust between parents and school professionals and a perceived lack of accountability to families (Ong-Dean, 2009; Rossetti et al., 2017, 2018).

Parents also report that time is a barrier (Onwughalu, 2011) because making time to attend to all activities and work simultaneously is difficult. Furthermore, some culturally and linguistically diverse parents face challenges of foreignness (Funfe Tatah Mentan, 2016; Milkman, 2011; Onwughalu, 2011). Even though IDEA emphasizes the role of parents, attention is not given to this provision by some professionals.

Strategies for Helping Educators Learn About and Work with Parents

Parents should be central to discussions of appropriate instruction and assessment practices for their child. Collaborative discussions between teacher and parents should address several aspects of general education, including: accessible instruction and assessment (Liu, Thurlow, et al., 2019; Lazarus et al., 2021); appropriate interventions for struggling students (Rinaldi & Samson 2008; Xu & Drame, 2008); the creation of Individual Learner Plans (Gold & Maxwell-Jolly, 2006) or other types of individualized plans for the academic instruction of ELs; and special education referral processes (Chen & Gregory, 2011; Conroy, 2012; Mueller & Haines, 2017; Mueller & Vick, 2019a, b). For students with disabilities, parents should collaborate in determining needed assistive technology (Parette & Brotherson, 2004), developing IEPs (Bray & Russell, 2016; Conroy, 2012), and transition planning for students finishing high school (Haines et al., 2018; Trainor et al., 2019).

Involving culturally and linguistically diverse parents in these collaborative decisions about academic outcomes for their child takes knowledge, skill, and intention on the part of teachers. Yet, family partnerships are an area where districts and schools may struggle (Fowler et al., 2019; Mapp & Kuttner, 2012). Teachers and principals identify family engagement and the development of parent partnerships as one of the most challenging aspects of their jobs (Markow et al., 2013; National Council on Disability, 2018) and one for which they often have not been prepared (Kyzar et al., 2019; Mapp & Kuttner, 2012; Mueller & Haines, 2017; Mueller & Vick, 2019a, b). Building partnerships with linguistically and culturally diverse parents, especially those with children who have complex educational needs, may be particularly challenging (Conroy, 2012; Fowler et al., 2019; Mapp & Kuttner, 2012). Thus, educators need ongoing support starting from their teacher preparation program and continuing throughout their professional career.

Teacher Competencies for Creating Parent Partnerships

Mapp and Kuttner (2012) developed a research-informed framework for family engagement initiatives that build educators' and parents' capacity to partner with each other. Their *Dual Capacity Framework for Family-School Partnerships* provides an underlying structure that supports specific strategies, policies, and programs that schools choose to develop. Although the framework is not specific to parents of ELs with disabilities, it has been recommended by the Office of English Language Acquisition (U.S. Department of Education, 2016) for educators who interact with parents of ELs, including parents of ELs with disabilities. The framework (see Figure

1) identifies four educator and parent competencies for engaging in effective partnerships on a broad level: a) cognition; b) capabilities; c) connections, and d) confidence. Although we discuss these separately, they are often addressed in combination in the literature.

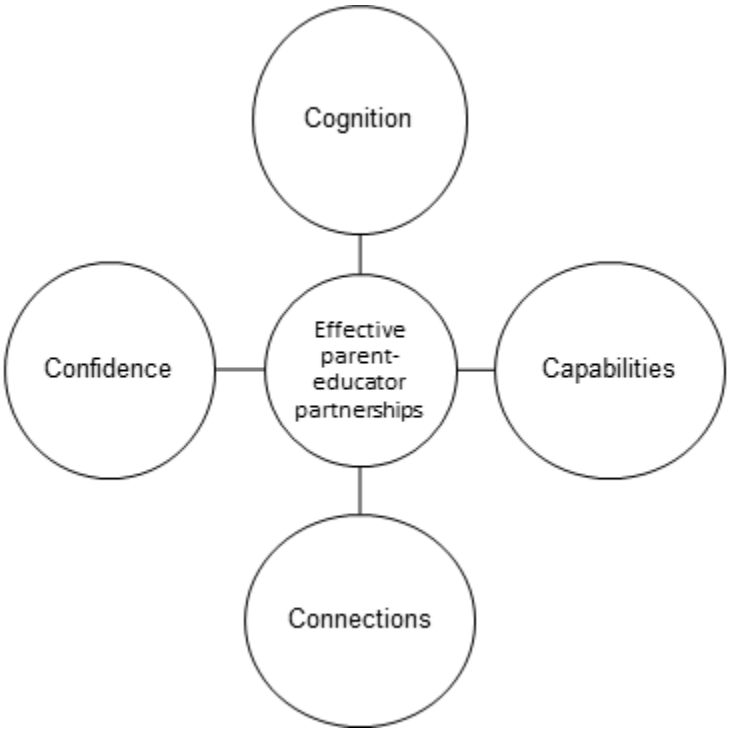

Figure 1. Competencies for Effective Parent-Educator Partnerships. Adapted from Mapp and Kuttner, 2012.

Cognition. In Mapp and Kuttner's (2012) framework, cognition is the last of the four competencies, but we place it first because of the important role it plays as the foundation for developing a teacher's knowledge and skills in parent collaboration. Cognition relates to teachers' beliefs about the value of parent partnerships. For long-term changes in parent engagement to occur, educators must be aware of their own beliefs and assumptions about families and be willing to change those beliefs if they act as obstacles to partnerships. Valuing parents of ELs with disabilities as equal partners requires educators to have open-mindedness to linguistic, cultural, ethnic, racial diversity, and to disability (Dray & Wisneski, 2011; Guerra & Nelson, 2009). They must see diverse families as capable of contributing to educational decisions about their child with a disability regardless of parents' degree of English proficiency (Hurley et al., 2017; McLeod, 2012).

School leaders play an important role in helping educators become aware of and monitor their beliefs about parents of ELs. Guerra and Nelson (2009) described a five-step process that a school leader can follow to establish a school culture that values linguistic and cultural diversity: a) implementing a building-wide self-assessment inventory of attitudes and beliefs toward linguistic and cultural diversity; b) discussing attitudes and beliefs with school staff and sharing data on beliefs that may reflect a negative perception of families and students; c) identifying educators who are ready to learn new information about linguistically and culturally diverse families and engaging with those educators in new ways; d) implementing small group learning opportunities to increase educators' knowledge about their own cultural identity, and (e) increasing the capacity of more educators by conducting multiple rounds of self-assessment and small group discussion

cycles led by past participants. All educators, as well as other types of school staff, who interact with ELs with disabilities, should be included.

Capabilities. Capabilities are the skills and knowledge teachers need to build effective partnerships with families (Mapp & Kuttner, 2012), including parents of ELs with disabilities. They include cultural competence (Kalyanpur & Harry, 2012), cross-cultural communication, and collaboration (Harry, 2008). We believe this competency also refers to educators' knowledge of collaborative decision-making processes that have structured roles for participants so that parents can contribute equally to discussions. To engage with parents in finding solutions that honor the family's cultural beliefs and practices, educators must be aware of their own beliefs and practices. This can be accomplished by using a reflection tool or equity audit at the school and classroom levels (Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium [MAEC], 2018a, b). Chu and Garcia (2014) offer a list of self-evaluation items special educators can use to gauge their level of cultural competency in the classroom, with several items measuring interaction between parents and teacher. These items could be adapted to be more broadly applicable to general educators and other school staff who work with ELs with disabilities. After a self-assessment, teachers can engage in planning based on staff strengths and desired short- and long-term outcomes (Goode et al., 2002).

Some researchers recommend that special education teacher programs require teacher candidates to participate in a family-based internship or field experience (Collier et al., 2015; Gauvreau et al., 2019). Teacher candidates observe diverse parents interacting with their child who has a disability, find out about the family's culture, and learn about the parents' beliefs about disability, education, and their child's future. Family internships provide future teachers with an extended opportunity to learn from parents in an atmosphere where parents are in a position of authority (Gauvreau et al., 2019; Harry, 2008).

Home visits are another strategy to develop an understanding and appreciation of parents' culture, values, and expectations for their child who is an EL with a disability (Conroy, 2012; Hands, 2014; Mapp & Kuttner, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Such visits would focus on developing trusting relationships and listening to what is important to the parent, rather than attempting to transmit messages from the school or teacher. If a strong trusting relationship has been developed with a teacher, a parent interview aimed at documenting a child's educational history, home language use, disability-related characteristics, and learning styles (administered via a language interpreter) can provide useful information for educational decision making (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). In addition, parents might be interviewed about their perceptions on classroom and assessment supports that have been used with their child to help gauge the effectiveness of those supports (Lazarus et al., 2021). Interviews should be conducted with caution because parents could perceive them as intimidating or threatening.

Being an effective cross-cultural communicator entails educators understanding non-verbal communication strategies in different cultures (More et al., 2013). For example, teachers should know that smiling may indicate embarrassment in certain Asian cultures rather than agreement (Pang, 2011). Teachers who are effective communicators engage in active listening to make sure diverse parents, particularly parents of ELs with disabilities, have a chance to express their ideas and beliefs (Hurley et al., 2017). Teachers who are effective communicators also use family-friendly English with minimal educational jargon (Lo, 2012, 2014). Clear, simple English also is vital to good communication when working with language interpreters and translators to convey information in the parents' dominant language (Hurley et al., 2017; Lo, 2012; Minnesota Department of Education, 2018; More et al., 2013). All meeting agendas and notes, as well as decision-making forms, should be translated into the parent's native language (More et al., 2013).

Parents may also require a glossary of key terms in their native language (Lo, 2012, 2014), and in some cases an oral explanation of translated documents (Stronach et al., 2019). Using multiple modes of communication may be important for parents who do not read well in their native language (Stronach et al., 2019).

To ensure high quality native language versions of English communication, teachers should arrange to meet with language interpreters and translators to convey important context and explanations of desired outcomes (Cheatham, 2011). Reviewing key concepts and terms will help to ensure that the native language presentation of ideas is aligned with the English version of the communication (Cheatham, 2011; Stronach et al., 2019; More et al., 2013). At a pre-meeting with an interpreter, educators should clarify the interpreter's role in the family meeting (More et al., 2013). For instance, a teacher might ask an interpreter to indicate when a conversation is not culturally sensitive or to provide the teacher with cultural knowledge that helps to contextualize a parent's statement (More et al., 2013).

Teacher education courses and professional development opportunities can help teachers develop their skill at working with interpreters and translators. Reviewing videotaped meetings conducted with a language interpreter and comparing an English translation of the interpreter's speech to what the teacher communicated can be a beneficial learning opportunity (Cheatham, 2011). Teacher candidates and practicing teachers can also benefit from role playing meetings using an interpreter to practice speaking directly to parents, speaking at a moderate speed, and taking frequent pauses for interpretation (Hurley et al., 2017; Liu, Funfe Tatah Mentan, et al., 2019).

There are structured practices a teacher can use to facilitate collaborative decision-making about a child's educational needs, including: holding pre-meetings or "mini-conferences" (Jones & Peterson-Ahmad, 2017) to prepare for larger meetings, using facilitated meeting procedures that incorporate a neutral facilitator to support effective communication, developing structured roles for each meeting participant that provide equal opportunities for everyone to speak, creating mutually established ground rules to encourage non-judgmental behaviors, keeping a parking lot for off topic issues, and using charts and visuals to record key points of the discussion (Mueller & Haines, 2017; Mueller & Vick, 2019a, b).

In addition, it is useful for teachers to have ideas for ways to get parent input and feedback on educational decisions such as beneficial classroom or testing supports for an individual child and possible instructional interventions. A parent-educator toolkit with multilingual, print and audio materials for parents and corresponding English materials for educators and principals is available from the Improving Instruction project (see www.nceo.info). It addresses the value of regular communication, using interpreters and translators to communicate, and determining accessibility supports in the classroom and on tests.

Connections. Teachers develop knowledge and skills about families through trusting, respectful relationships with them, and through relationships with community organizations and services that support families (Mapp & Kuttner, 2012). A strong relationship with families will enable educators to ask parents how they get information to inform decision-making for their child, and the linguistic and cultural resources available to support their child after high school. A lack of trust between parents and educators acts as a deterrent to true partnerships (Conroy, 2012) and to make informed decisions that build on the assets families and students possess.

Confidence. Teachers need to feel comfortable and confident in creating parent partnerships (Mapp & Kuttner, 2012). Teachers with high self-efficacy see themselves as capable of developing partnerships with diverse parents of students with disabilities, including ELs with disabilities (Chu,

2013). Extended field placements with families, home visits, cultural sensitivity, and collaborative practices all can increase teachers' confidence. High levels of teacher self-efficacy correlate with higher levels of student academic achievement, and with greater levels of parent support (Tucker et al., 2005).

School-Level Approaches to Developing Collaborative Partnerships

Successful school-parent partnerships require a sustained, systemic approach that ensures educators develop their skills and abilities to form parent partnerships and apply those skills. The U.S. Department of Education (2007) presented a three-phase conceptual model for school leaders describing ways in which parents and educators can partner effectively to support all students' learning. First, school leaders should involve educators in collaborative decision-making about policies to increase student achievement. Activities include training educators to participate with parents in district or school advisory groups, facilitating meaningful collaborative conversations between teachers and parents outside of meetings, supporting teachers in incorporating parent input on the effectiveness of parent involvement policies and initiatives, and monitoring school or district compliance with parent involvement policies. Second, leaders should identify and train staff to work with parents of ELs with disabilities. Training should develop staff capacity to value parent involvement in educational decision-making, help educators determine a school's strengths and challenges in creating a family-friendly climate, support educators to understand and use data, and coaching educators to train other educators and parents. Third, school leaders should communicate parent involvement policies and procedures to all educators within a school or district.

Strategies for Helping Parents Learn about and Work as Active Partners with Educators

Strategies to help parents work with school officials involve developing a "collective trust" (Forsyth et al., 2011) in which parents collaborate with teachers and other school professionals, and develop partnerships that are geared toward mutual respect and the academic success of the student (Risko & Walker-Dalhouse, 2009).

Schools must be intentional in helping parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to understand the school system and their rights and responsibilities. Information about making decisions for students' academic progress should be written in simple and clear English and allowances made for translation and interpretation when needed (Funfe Tatah Mentan et al., 2019a, b; Lazarus et al., 2019). Investing in giving culturally and linguistically diverse parents of ELs with disabilities detailed information that makes sense to them will alleviate any miscommunication or misunderstanding of school policies and procedures.

Schools also should exercise patience with parents of ELs with disabilities as they learn to become co-educators of students. These parents have agency and can act, when properly encouraged to do so, so the student succeeds. School-prescribed ways of being engaged may have a negative effect on the student's educational progress and performance (Rossetti, Sauer, et al., 2017; Rossetti, Redash, et al., 2018; Schnee & Bose, 2010). Instead, a joint venture between parents and educators is associated with more positive outcomes.

Active participation of parents (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017), teachers, and other professionals in an IEP meeting demands collective trust to dismantle any mutual distrust that exists. Active participation entails contributing to the process and meeting decisions in a satisfactory manner as an equal partner in ensuring the educational progress of the student. Parents should be encouraged to know that because they are the child's first teachers, they are an important part of the child's

well-being and educational success. Partnering with the schools from this perspective will lead to sustaining partnerships with school professionals (Haines et al., 2015).

Conclusions

Available student and parent data suggest that when working with parents of ELs with disabilities, educators should be mindful of families' knowledge of formal schooling in general, and their knowledge of the U.S. school system in particular. Educators may need to provide these families with more information to give them an understanding of how U.S. school systems work, processes, procedures, and desired outcomes of special education and English language development programs, and commonly held U.S. beliefs about parents' roles and responsibilities in advocating for their child. In addition, parents who have lower levels of education in their first language potentially require information in multiple formats in their native language if they are not fluent English speakers and do not read well in their native language. With the potential for students to come from more than 400 language groups, schools and districts must make native language interpretation and translation a priority to effectively communicate with parents from a variety of language backgrounds. School leaders hold responsibility for developing parent-school partnerships. Even though most of the literature focuses on what teachers should do, and how to train teachers, school administrators should be creating the conditions to support parent engagement and mutual trust in a sustained school- or district-wide effort. They also should also be creating school- or district-wide policies and helping develop teachers to implement those policies.

Further, schools should give more attention to teacher beliefs about diversity and parent involvement. Tools to help educators self-assess would be helpful, particularly those that examine working with families of ELs with disabilities. Districts and schools should adopt specific collaborative meeting processes that have a role for parents to play and help develop the skills parents need to take on those roles. If all teachers follow those processes, parent partnerships would not be left to chance or to the skill of an individual teacher.

It is clear from the literature that educators need more direct interaction and communication with families (Collier et al., 2015; Conroy, 2012; Gauvreau et al., 2019; Hands, 2014; Harry, 2008; Hedeen et al., 2011; Mapp & Kuttner, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Educators in training need more direct experience with families prior to teaching to enhance their feelings of self-efficacy about creating relationships with parents of ELs with disabilities. Intentional efforts on the part of educators and their leaders will help create opportunities for school personnel and parents to focus on the academic success of ELs with disabilities and improve their educational outcomes.

Educators need more access to, and comfort in, working with language interpreters. This is key to developing collaboration. The interpreters must be qualified, and well trained in the specific school terminology they need to explain to parents. In addition, educators need more direct interaction and communication with families. Educators in training need more direct experience with families prior to teaching to enhance their feelings of self-efficacy about creating relationships with parents of ELs with disabilities.

Finally, parent partnerships should be reciprocal and go beyond those mandated in special education law. With parents as equal partners in the education of their student, trusting relationships can be developed. Parents of students with disabilities have some specific, structured ways to partner with schools and teachers in making decisions for their children. But those should

take place within a larger context of a warm and supportive school environment that values parent participation in all aspects.

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