

THE RELATIONSHIP OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT
TO PARENT KNOWLEDGE OF LEGAL
PROVISIONS REGARDING
SPECIAL EDUCATION

By

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PREFACE

Planning and conducting this research has been an enlightening and challenging experience. The time spent in exploring families' thoughts and ideas has both broadened my viewpoint and helped me to personalize the purpose of my task and job. My gratitude goes out to the many families of children with disabilities, the teachers, and administrators who helped me complete this study.

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As I write this preface to this dissertation, it seems to be both an end and a beginning. I am so thankful to say the word 'beginning', because completing this degree has always been a goal for me. Several times, I thought it would not be possible, but it seems my life has been guided by the Lord. He has a plan for me and has given me great blessings. I have learned to accept and enjoy these blessings. It is my hope that I may be able to help others in their search.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The disintegration of the traditional family and its ability to cope with societal problems has both broadened the role of schools in dealing with social issues and encouraged the development of government programs to spur parents to become involved in the education of their children (Flaxman & Inger, 1991). Today's changing demographics have also dramatically altered the makeup of the student population. Flaxman and Inger found that increasing rates of poverty, divorce, single-parenting, teen pregnancy, family mobility and instability, and employment outside the home by women with children have placed many families under great stress. While 40% of today's school children will have lived with a single parent by the time they reach age 18, more than 20% live in poverty, 15% speak a native language other than English, and 15% have physical and/or mental disabilities (McLaughlin & Shields, 1987). Conventional efforts to encourage parent involvement in schools have too often been aimed at members of the "traditional" family and thus have proven ineffective in promoting the involvement of the parent(s) of the "nontraditional" children (Flaxman & Inger, 1991).

There is evidence that parent involvement leads to improved student achievement and significant long-term benefits through better school attendance, reduced dropout rates, decreased delinquency, and lower teen pregnancy rates (Peterson, 1989). Furthermore, these improvements were reported to occur no matter what the economic, racial, or cultural background of the family. Parents involved as partners in their children's education feel better about themselves and are often motivated to improve their own education, while their students' citizenship and social values improve and teachers find an improved working climate as the schools become safer and more conducive to learning (Henderson, 1990; McLaughlin & Shields, 1987; Moles, 1982; Walberg, Bole, & Waxman, 1980). Since a child's development does not take place in a vacuum away from the parents, the necessity of a parent education approach which emphasizes involvement is realized (Morse, 1992).

President George Bush stated that,

For tomorrow's students, the next generation, we must create a New Generation of American Schools. For all of us, for the adults who think our school days are over, we've got to become a Nation of Students - recognize learning is a lifelong process. Finally, outside our schools we must cultivate communities where learning can happen (Bush, 1991, preface).

Those associated with his America 2000 program identified six national education goals with readiness for school identified as the first goal: "By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn" (Bush, 1991, p. 3). The objectives associated with that goal include the following.

- All disadvantaged and disabled children will have access to high quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs that help prepare children for school.
- Every parent in America will be a child's first teacher and devote time each day to helping his or her preschool child learn; parents will have access to the training and support they need.
- Children will receive the nutrition and health care needed to arrive at school with healthy minds and bodies, and the number of low birthweight babies will be significantly reduced through enhanced prenatal health systems.

"Our first priority must be to provide at least one year of preschool for all disadvantaged children with strong parental involvement. American homes must be places of learning" (Bush, 1991, p. 41). A key element that encourages parent involvement is a "sense of partnership between the parent and school" (Moore, 1990, p. 3). Even with the emphasis and knowledge that this partnership is beneficial to children, when it comes to parent education and support, there is a vast difference in pragmatic approaches and little research to develop this partnership (Moore, 1990).

One survey was found during a review of literature that attempted to assess the significance of special education laws. Findings from a survey conducted by Harris and Associates (1986) for the International Center for the Disabled reported that

the survey findings also reveal a powerful endorsement of the role played by the federal government in giving better opportunities to disabled persons. A two-thirds majority (67%) of disabled Americans think that federal laws passed since the late 1960's to give better opportunities to disabled Americans have helped a great deal or helped somewhat. There is strong support for the

role played by federal government among most disabled American.

Nearly one-third (31%) of disabled Americans say that they are familiar with Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973... 31% is a fairly high level of public familiarity with a specific law. But it is one of several findings in this survey which show that society, and those who work with disabled people, have got to inform the great majority of disabled persons about particular laws and services designed to assist them in participating fully in society (Harris & Associates, 1986, p. 20).

Statement of the Problem

School leaders and other educators have a history of having too often denied access and avoided providing services to children with disabilities. A federal mandate (P.L. 94-142) was required before boards of education, administrators, teachers, and even some parents recognized the need to provide educational and related services for individuals with disabilities. Because responsible persons lack an understanding of the laws, many individuals who are eligible and in need of such services are not participating in programs. Schools are caught in the conflict between limited revenue and personnel and the need to comply with special education mandates. School personnel must now provide the parent with a copy of parent rights but are not required to explain anything more than what is written on the parent rights form. The parent thus encounters the dilemma of wanting services for the child with a disability but not forcing the issue because of a desire to not create problems for the schools, fear of retaliation, or lack of understanding regarding processes by which to access those services. Greater knowledge of the relevant laws,

regulations, and case law might enable a parent to more effectively identify and secure necessary services for the child with a disability.

P.L. 94-142, as will be further explained in the next chapter, addressed parent involvement in three ways to assure at least minimal compliance with the law. Prior notice must be provided to the parent of the intent to change a child's educational placement and a parent signature is required for permission to initially test or place a child on an individualized education program. A copy of the state-approved Parents Rights Form must also be provided annually to the parent. Complaint procedures for grievances must be established and available for guidance in the mediation of conflicts between the parent and school personnel. Minimal compliance with these parent involvement regulations meets only the letter of the law.

The real problem is that simply providing a copy of the Parents Rights or getting a signature results in token gestures to meet the mandate of the law and does not necessarily promote understanding. In order to maximize the student's educational program, parent involvement is beneficial for repetition, transfer, and/or generalization of learning. There is also a need to assess the parent's knowledge of the legal provision regarding special education laws and the involvement of the parent in identifying concerns, obtaining services, and assisting with program development. The subsequent need then is to identify whether there is a relationship between knowledge and involvement. Such information could serve to develop a means of increasing both.

The specific purpose of this study was to assess parents' levels of knowledge of special education policies and laws and the degree of involvement they have in their children's educational programs. The data analysis was designed to identify strength relationship between these two variables. To guide the analysis of data, the following hypotheses have been formulated.

Null Hypothesis: There will be no significant relationship between the level of parent knowledge about special education and the amount of parent involvement with the child's educational program.

Directional Hypothesis: There will be a significant positive relationship between the level of parent knowledge about special education and the amount of parent involvement with the child's educational program.

A series of research questions were also developed to guide the collection and analysis of data.

- How much knowledge do parents of children with disabilities have regarding the legal provisions governing services to such children?
- How much involvement do parents of children with disabilities have in the educational programs provided to their children?
- Is there a relationship between the level of knowledge and the degree of involvement?
- What types of activities do parents view as most beneficial in increasing their levels of knowledge regarding special education?
- What types of activities do parents view as most beneficial in increasing their levels of involvement in their child's program?

- Are there relationships between the independent variables of knowledge and involvement and the dependent demographic variables including gender, age, and education.

Significance of the Problem

At the current time, the literature contains few assessments of the level of parent knowledge regarding the laws mandating services to children with disabilities. A parent is required to participate in the planning of the child's educational programs yet often receives little or no information about either the parent's or the child's rights and/or responsibilities. A comprehensive system of parent education that identifies and respects the parent's entry level of knowledge and enhances knowledge acquisition may ultimately result in greater student achievement.

Active pursuit in acquiring services, meeting goals and objectives, and obtaining information is an indicator of an involved parent. As stated previously, parent involvement may have many benefits but may be especially beneficial for those children whose disabilities require specialized instruction. The unique needs of individuals who may be deaf, blind, and/or physically disabled require parent education beyond the typical rhetoric of developmental ages and stages. The ability of a parent to communicate through sign language or to position a child properly in order to lessen the contraction of muscles is a skill learned through education and involvement. Repetition and consistency are extremely important for all children, but especially for the child with disabilities. With parent involvement in following up on the

identified objectives, repetition and consistency will be provided along with a transfer of skills and generalization of knowledge.

A wide variety of activities are available for the parent wishing to be involved, ranging from reading books to talking with professionals, attending meetings, or taking college classes. The informed and involved parent is likely to be an empowered parent. The empowered parent is one who then can coordinate and communicate with professionals on realistic goals, services, and objectives to devise an integrated, consistent, and appropriate program that will most likely obtain the maximum potential of the child.

Awareness of the laws that assure equal opportunities to individuals with disabilities may be vitally important for a number of reasons. Knowledge of the language and intent of these laws may empower parents to advocate more effectively for their children and strengthen their ability to participate fully as partners on their children's educational teams. As independence and self-sufficiency for individuals become increasingly important outcomes of special education, it is important that individuals with disabilities and/or their parents understand the laws and the legal ramifications in the decision making process. Knowledge of the law can help parents and professionals work together on behalf of children to realize the equal education opportunity guaranteed by law.

Limitations

The study was limited to parents served by the Special Services Co-op which includes 25 school districts in central Oklahoma. The population was thus comprised of parents of students in those districts for whom Individual Educational Programs (IEPs) were in place.

Other limitations include the fact that the assessment of knowledge is a new instrument without prior history of reliability and validity. There is a possibility that respondents could have self-reported greater levels of involvement to reflect their perceptions of what should be rather than what is their actual involvement. The education level and communication skills of parents could affect the ability to provide reliable data. Opportunities for parents to attend conferences, meetings, or visit classrooms tend to vary significantly from district to district. Some districts offer no organized effort or system to encourage parent involvement or parent education. Other school districts extend invitations to parents for weekly or even daily interactions.

The researcher serves as director of the Special Services Co-op. The Co-op Director acts as the chairperson of the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Committee, a committee that surveys, plans, conducts, and evaluates inservice training activities for the region. A minimum of three regional conferences are held each year. Parents are invited to attend all but the administrators' conference. The Co-op Director also disseminates a monthly newsletter which provides federal, state, and local updates.

Although the researcher has been actively involved in previous parent training activities, no such training or related activities took place during this study. The study was designed to safeguard against researcher bias and to minimize any impact the researcher's position could have had on the study by maintaining confidentiality through the use of designated persons and coded forms.

Definitions of Terms

Because this study is focused on the field of special education, it is necessary to define certain terms.

- Special education "means specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability" (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990, 20 U.S.C. 1401(16)).
- The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document which delineates a student's individual goals and objectives and is reviewed annually. The IEP is developed by a multidisciplinary team which includes the parent(s) as well as the special education teacher(s), regular teacher(s), and administrator(s).
- Parent "means a parent, a guardian, a person acting as a parent of a child, or a surrogate parent who has been appointed in accordance with Sec. 300.514. The term does not include the State if the child is a ward of the State" (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990, 20 U.S.C. 1415). The parent is thus the person who is designated to sign the IEP. The term "parent" is defined to also include persons acting in the place of a parent, such as a grandmother or stepparent with whom a child lives, as

well as persons who are legally responsible for a child's welfare (Kahn, 1992, p. 34.300-6).

- Related Services "means transportation and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as are required to assist the child with a disability to benefit from special education. The term related services includes 'Parent counseling and training,' and is interpreted as the school assisting parents in understanding the special needs of their child and providing information about child development" (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990, 20 U.S.C. 1410 (a)(17)).
- Case law is defined as the resolution related to any question that has been decided through the American judiciary system.
- Parent rights are those rights listed in the Oklahoma Parents Rights form (see Appendix A).

Summary

In summary, this need for knowledge of and involvement in special education by the parents of children with disabilities is the focal point for the study. The problem is determining whether or not schools and other agencies are making effective provisions to meet the letter of the law as well as the intent of the law. The purpose of the study thus was to assess parents' levels of knowledge of special education policies and laws and the degree of involvement they have in their children's special education programs. The significance of this study may be to provide information that will enable and empower parents to advocate more effectively for their children and

strengthen their ability to participate fully as partners on their children's educational teams.

Chapter II is used to provide a review of literature pertaining to the historical involvement of parents in the educational programs' for children with disabilities, along with a review of the pragmatic approaches educators use to inform and involve parents. Chapter III contains a description of the research design for the study. Included is the definition of the population and the sample for the study, the instrument used to measure knowledge and involvement, and the manner in which the data were collected and analyzed. Chapter IV contains the presentation and analysis of the data and reference to the hypotheses outlined in Chapter I. Chapter V concludes this study with the summary, conclusions, recommendations, and commentary by the researcher.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter is organized in four sections: history, exemplary programs recognized by the United States Department of Education, research, and practices in the State of Oklahoma. The history segment contains a summary of the literature on the historical involvement of parents in the educational programs for children with disabilities. The second portion of this chapter describes validated programs approved by the Program Effectiveness Panel (PEP) and disseminated by the National Diffusion Network (NDN). The third section is a review of research and best practices recognized by national experts in the field. The final segment is used to describe practices of selected agencies in the State of Oklahoma for educating and involving the family.

Historical Roles of Parents of Children With Disabilities

The early history of America is closely linked with religious movements (Cruickshank & Johnson, 1975). Since religion and political life were so strongly related, one might expect that in such a situation the person with a disability would have found an open door

of acceptance. Religion was narrowly interpreted, however, in those early times. Man was viewed as having been created in God's own image and God was conceived to be perfect in a physical as well as a theological sense. Thus, if God were perfect, man in his attempts to be God-like must also be perfect, physically as well as in other measures. The physically disabled, viewed as being imperfect, were then considered to be outside the bounds of religion (Cruickshank & Johnson, 1975).

To the early English colonists, the family was considered to be the basic foundation of life. While they condemned those considered to be dependent by virtue of irresponsibility or idleness, they were willing to help those destitute by reason of age, disability, or other circumstances beyond human control. It was thus customary for colonial families to look after their own members who might be ailing or handicapped (Lenihan, 1977).

With the increase and concentration of the population in the seaport towns during the 18th Century, agitation mounted for greater institutional care of the poor and the disabled. What these colonists had in mind was usually some form of almshouse to shelter those dependents for whom the normal channels of family care were unavailable or deemed impractical (Rowland, 1971). Such a public almshouse had been erected in Boston in 1662.

In the 17th and 18th Centuries, the individual with a disability, regardless of family environment, was often relegated to a most difficult position in society. Notions regarding disabilities were closely linked with mysticism, spirits, and unusual characteristics that were frequently most unrealistic, such as the belief in blind

people developing a sixth sense of omnipotence. The early records of commissioners of poor houses or county jails and boards of visitors to mental hospitals abound with reports such as those of an inmate who had epilepsy, another who was crippled, and yet another inmate "with fits who was chained to a stake in the yard. There was little compassion in the minds of men" (Cruickshank & Johnson, 1975, p. 10).

The 19th Century, particularly in the eastern region of the United States, was one of much activity on behalf of children and youth with disabilities (Cruickshank & Johnson, 1975). Schools for the blind, the deaf, and the mentally retarded appeared. "The Massachusetts School for the Blind and Perkins Institution were incorporated in 1829" (Cruickshank & Johnson, 1975, p. 12). In 1883, the New York Institute for the Education of the Blind was opened in New York City (Lyttle, 1971). The establishment of these institutions reflected a changing attitude on the part of families and state policymakers. A portion of society accepted the belief that individuals with disabilities needed to be cared for in different ways. "The residential, or boarding, school came into being as a significant American institution" (Cruickshank & Johnson, 1975, p. 12).

Although the development of the residential schools marked an important milestone in providing services to children with disabilities, there ultimately resulted a state of lethargy toward those with disabilities on the part of the very culture which created the schools. Since it was easy to build an institution and place it miles away from the family homes of those with disabilities, this was often

done. Once such a facility was completed, children could be sent there for care.

"At that point, the conscience of society, including parents and other family members, often ceased functioning. Society's guilt feeling was assuaged. Society had met its obligation. The disabled could thus be forgotten"
(Cruickshank & Johnson, 1975, p. 12).

The residential school was a critical element in the European practices for dealing with individuals with disabilities, and the social customs of Europe were often followed in the United States at that time. The growth of the residential schools was thus rapid from 1850 to 1920 (Lenihan, 1977).

During the following three decades, the public policy argument focused on whether or not students with disabilities should receive educational services in public schools (Goldberg & Cruickshank, 1958). Such debates focused also on whether or not they should be required to attend regular or segregated schools (Sontag, Burke, & York, 1973). The reaction of public schools to required racial desegregation (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954) provides one data set for examining educational change. The racial desegregation literature strongly suggests that school districts whose leaders responded positively to the need for change by instituting well-conceived change efforts were more successful in maintaining or improving the quality of education than were districts where educators resisted or ignored the need for change (McDonnell & Hardman, 1989).

Since the 1960s, there has been a virtual avalanche of federal legislation that has related directly or indirectly to individuals with

disabilities. Numerous court decisions, added to the state and federal laws passed since the 1960s, now protect the rights of those with disabilities and guarantee that they receive free and appropriate, publicly supported education (Brady, Dennis, & McDougall, 1989).

According to Poyadue (1993), the law that had the initial major impact on all schools and families across the nation was known as Public Law 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. This law grew out of and strengthened earlier acts of a similar name. The major purposes of PL 94-142 were:

- To guarantee that a "free appropriate education," including special education and related service programming, is available to all children and youth with disabilities who require it;
- To assure that the rights of children and youth with disabilities and their parents or guardians are protected;
- To assess and assure the effectiveness of special education at all levels of government; and
- To financially assist the efforts of state and local governments in providing full educational opportunities to all children and youth with disabilities through the use of federal funds (Kahn, 1992).

P.L. Law 94-142 has been amended several times, in large part to bring infants, toddlers, and other preschool children under its auspices. Other areas were clarified, refined, and added to according to public input. The current such law is known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Schools are now required to involve parents, yet many parents want the professionals to make all of the educational decisions (Meyers & Blanche, 1987). Baker and Brightman (1984) concluded, regarding parent involvement, that

"most parents are far from fulfilling [their] roles" (p. 297) in relaying information, assisting in the decision-making, and advocating for their children. In fact, it was reported that the percentage of parents who attended IEP meetings was between 50% and 60% (Scanlon, Arick, & Phelps, 1981). A study in Michigan reported that educators did not seek parent involvement and were "passive in informing parents of their own and children's rights" (Halpern, 1982, p. 272). Parents usually found out about their rights from child advocacy groups or personal acquaintances. Leler (1983) recommended that future studies be conducted to assess the parent's role in the education of the child with a disability and the parent's need for education or training as a partner with the school.

Looking back over the last 25 years, it is clear that federal protection and guarantees of the educational rights of individuals with disabilities have been an evolving story (Brady et al., 1989). By the mid-1970s, there were several right-to-education cases brought to court by parents in different regions of the country. Two precedent-setting cases involving the education of children with disabilities took place in Pennsylvania (Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania) and the District of Columbia (Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia). The results of both cases were court orders to provide all children with disabilities, regardless of the severity, with a publicly supported education (Brady et al., 1989).

"These laws recognize the critical role of parents and mandate their participation. However, parents who lack knowledge and training cannot take full advantage of these laws. Children suffer"

(Poyadue, 1993, p. 27). Poyadue also noted that parents who are not emotionally and psycho-socially supported cannot take full advantage of the rights offered in these laws. "Establishing rights for parents is meaningless if parents are not informed about the nature of those rights, and prepared with knowledge and skill to implement them" (Turnbull, 1983, p. 4).

Westling (1989) suggested that it is time for a change, arguing the fact that people who have mental or physical disabilities are different, are in fact deficient in their learning abilities, is not a viable reason to offer them a segregated educational program or one inferior in its composition. On the contrary, their disabilities call for provision of the most appropriate education in order to enable them to function as participating members of their communities. In past years, many thought that an appropriate education could best be provided through a model in which students with disabilities were withdrawn from the rest of the school population. But research and experience have taught otherwise; what has been learned should now be used to change educational and other practices (Westling, 1989). The trend is now toward supporting care in one's own home. Today, the majority of individuals with disabilities are not in state-run facilities. The whole thrust in social policy welfare reflects a series of strategies to support parents and to ensure the likelihood of youngsters staying in their own homes (Brown et al., 1984).

Nationally Validated Projects

The National Diffusion Network (NDN) aligns its efforts to follow the Educate America Goals in order to identify effective, cost-efficient, and easily replicated programs that enables any type of educational system to increase and improve the educational opportunities it provides for the population served. The NDN was established by the United States Department of Education upon the belief that there are few problems encountered by schools that have not been solved successfully in some other location (National Diffusion Network, 1994). The NDN originated in 1974 and most of the 450 programs validated during its first two decades were developed by classroom teachers. According to the most recent statistics, "more that 31,000 schools in all 50 states" and 7 territories have adopted NDN programs, "about 81,000 persons received inservice training, and an estimated 4.5 million students benefited" ((National Diffusion Network, 1994, p. 3). The topics have ranged from preschool services for children with disabilities to career education. For the purpose of this study, an examination was conducted of the NDN programs emphasizing parent involvement and/or parent education.

Only five programs were specifically identified as having a primary intent of parent education and active involvement. The Early Recognition Intervention Network (ERIN) is "a curriculum/assessment program appropriate for children with special needs, ages 3-7 and their teachers and parents" (National Diffusion Network, 1994, p. 12-10). Initiated in Massachussetts in 1978, ERIN is used in

special preschools, home programs, and regular early childhood programs. The emphasis is placed on teaching adults to facilitate a learning environment.

The Family Oriented Structured Preschool Activity ("Seton Hall" Program) is "a program that prepares the parent to be the child's first and most significant teacher." Parents accompany their children to neighborhood elementary schools for a two-hour session once each week from September to May where "they learn how to be with their child as they teach" (National Diffusion Network, 1994, p. 11-9). This program was developed in Minnesota in 1975.

Originated in New York in 1978, The Mother-Child Home Program (MCHP) of the Verbal Interaction Project is a "home-based program to prevent educational disadvantage in children, ages 2-4, of parents with low income and limited education" (EPTW, 1994, p. 11-9).

Parents As Teachers, approved nationally as a validated program in 1991, is "an early parenting program providing comprehensive services to families from the third trimester of pregnancy until the children are three years of age" (National Diffusion Network, 1994, p. 11-5). This Missouri-based project has quickly become a popular program, having been adopted by a number of Oklahoma schools.

The Portage Project was begun in Wisconsin in 1975. This project has a family focus emphasizing training in the home to enable parents to better understand children from birth to age six who have multicategorical disabilities (National Diffusion Network, 1994).

In conclusion, the review of NDN projects, has indicated that most programs emphasizing parent involvement and education are designed primarily for the parent of very young children. No project was found that was intended to develop parent involvement for those with older students. Also, no project was identified for that training or sensitization of educators for better understanding of families. It should be noted that several of these projects include the availability of parent awareness packets in their program descriptions.

Research and Best Practices

In the review of literature and the search for nationally validated projects, other research was identified that may be pertinent in defining what seem to be principles generally accepted by the experts as best practices. Best educational practices are guidelines or tools which can be used to provide a quality education to students with disabilities (Fox, 1987).

While a variety of parent education efforts and many forms of direct parental involvement in the schools exist, a few general principles apply to each of them:

- Involving parents in their children's education improves student achievement and behavior, but parent involvement is most effective when it is comprehensive, well planned, and long lasting.
- Parent involvement should be developmental and preventive, an integral part of a school improvement or restructuring strategy, rather than a remedial intervention.
- The benefits of parent involvement are not confined to early childhood or the elementary grades. There are strong positive effects from involving parents continuously through high school.

- Parents do not have to be well-educated themselves in order to help.
- Children from low-income and minority families have the most to gain when schools involve parents...

The time when parents' only link to school was to attend the once-a-year parent-teacher conference is over, not only because family life has changed but also because schools need and require parents' support. While there is greater parent involvement now, however, it can too easily become token participation on the periphery of schooling, with one-way communication from school to home" (Flaxman & Inger, 1991, p. 5).

Foremost among goals today is for individuals with disabilities to become a part of society to the greatest extent possible. This guiding idea is referred to as the normalization principle. The basic theory of normalization is to create for individuals with disabilities lives that approximate normalcy (Bank-Mikkelsen, 1969; Wolfenberger, 1972).

In accordance with the concept of normalization, the goal for persons with disabilities is no different from that of their non-disabled peers: to function as participating members of the community. This means that persons with disabilities should reside in ordinary residences and participate in the many facets of family and societal life (Buddle & Bachelder, 1986); engage in competitive employment (Falvey, 1986; Wehman, Moon, & McCarthy, 1986; Brown et al., 1984); and enjoy a variety of recreational and leisure activities with disabled and non-disabled peers (Aveno, 1987; Ford et al., 1984).

Fox (1987) identified a number of principles that could be used to assess educational programs for students with disabilities. They included the following.

- Age-appropriate public school placement. The placement of choice for all students (with or without disability) is within their own local school in their home town with children of similar age.
- Social integration. All students have equal opportunity to interact with community members and others their own age.
- Integrated delivery of services. Students who need special services (e.g., special education, physical or occupational therapy, speech or language therapy, recreation services) receive them in home, community and school settings. People providing these services consult with teachers, parents and others involved with students to enable a greater number of people to deliver the special services.
- Curricular expectations. The curriculum used to teach students with disabilities includes sequences of skills which lead to competent adult functioning in vital areas such as communication, community living, work and recreation.
- Transition planning. Planning occurs for students well in advance of major moves (e.g., from segregated to integrated educational environments, from preschool to kindergarten, and from elementary to high school, from high school to post-high school services).
- Home-school partnership. Parents have ongoing opportunities to participate in the development of their child's educational program and to carry instructional programs. The school also has a regular system for communicating with parents and providing them with information.

Dunst, Leet, and Trivette (1988) cited research findings which they reported as suggesting that, when self-identified needs go unmet, an individual will invest emotional and physical energy to meet these needs. Van Willigen (1986) found that parents want a consultant, someone who is able to provide expert advice about the policies, procedures, eligibility requirements, and other aspects of the service providing system, or a culture broker, someone who serves as a linkage between two cultural systems (the family and the service-providing community), with the expressed intent of changing the system, not the family. Sontag and Schacht (1994) reported that parents want the decisions about their children to be their own decisions. Keeping this in mind, they concluded that family decision making becomes a reasonable basis for program planning. The risk associated with family decision making is the loss of control currently available to the program administrators and professionals in the field (Sontag & Schacht, 1994). However, "parental involvement is now a major component of efforts to restructure or improve schools nationally" (Flaxman & Inger, 1991, p.3). Powell (1990) pointed out several implications which must be considered when designing a pragmatic parent education and support program.

- Parental contributions to the learning experiences should be maximized. . . .
- Many determinants of parenting are potentially alterable. These include parents' knowledge of child development, parent's psychological well-being, connections with formal and informal sources of material and emotional support, and problems with the work-family interface. . . .
- Parents prefer people sources of information (Powell, 1990, p. 16-17).

In also examining the last of Powell's conclusions, Sontag and Schacht (1994) found that "family and friends were more likely to be cited as sources of information than professionals" (p. 430).

"Family-centered early intervention programs have become the 'best practice' model for service delivery" (Sontag & Schacht, 1994, p. 422) to children with special needs and their families in the 1990s. This conclusion has been supported by other research (Bailey et al., 1992; Shelton, Jeppson, & Johnson, 1992). However, parent involvement is not the only answer to all the problems associated with the education of students with disabilities. School must become more flexible, adaptive, and innovative in order to restructure ineffective practices. "Parental involvement is a tool for these changes because it is a mechanism that links society, schools, and homes" (Flaxman & Inger, 1991, p. 6).

Very little empirical evidence is available to guide the development of the family-centered model (Beckman & Bristol, 1991; Dunst et al., 1988; Summers et al., 1990). Professionals may be experiencing difficulty with the new family-centered process, in which they relinquish their traditional role of decision maker to one of consultant or facilitator (Leviton, Mueller, & Kauffman, 1992). As Leviton and others (1992) described in their family-centered consultation model, the professional should not give specific recommendations for achieving goals but, rather, "should give all possible options not just ones the professional thinks would be effective" (p. 3).

A practice described by Healy, Keesee, and Smith in 1985, that of an interdisciplinary approach to services, still is reported to

present problems and to threaten people. An interdisciplinary approach simply means that people from various disciplines, professions, or interests use teamwork to identify, serve, and evaluate children with disabilities. "The traits of our individualistic and competitive society, when transposed into individualistic and competitive professional groups, create a difficult environment for the development of the interdisciplinary process" (Healy et al., 1985, p. 78). According to the same author, "change comes when parents demand it" (p. 80). "As professionals and parents join forces as advocates" (p. 80), it will require this type of support for research to document cost-effectiveness and individual needs and successes.

At this point in time, the trend across the United States seems to be heading toward providing total inclusion in the mainstream of the home, school, and community (Brady et al., 1989). The literature does point to such movement toward empowering and involving the family. The question is, are educators practicing according to what is reported and mandated as family-oriented practices, including involvement in decision making or are they making token gestures to minimally involve and educate parents?

Oklahoma Practices

After examining the issues related to parent involvement and education, it may be useful to note the limited number of projects that target the topic of study at the national level. It thus may be of value to describe several selected groups and agencies in Oklahoma in order to identify practices and trends in this state.

The IDEA State Advisory Board, consisting of representatives from all pertinent public and private agencies and organizations in Oklahoma, headed by the State Director of Special Education, identified several concerns in the state. The highest priority was assigned to a series of recommendations for parents.

- Provide 'Parent Rights' in other languages/modes of communication.
- Need examples/materials to help families plan.
- Continued priority of funding for parent involvement in subgrant RFPs (emphasize need for resources for parents and parents as 'real partners' in the process).
- Utilize parents as trainers" (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 1994).

As a consequence of this priority, the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) has developed copies of the Parents Rights in Spanish and Vietnamese. An audio cassette tape of this same information is also available. If any school employee has a need for other translations or modes of communication, the OSDE has made arrangements to accomodate those needs (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 1994). (Appendix A contains a copy of the Parent Rights for Oklahoma, English and Spanish versions).

The Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth (OCCY), an oversight agency developed by the state legislature, has developed a list of priorities based on a needs survey completed in 1991. The number one priority identified was to establish Family Resource Centers (FRCs) in the State of Oklahoma. As of May 1, 1994, 11 FRCs have been established throughout the state (Clark, 1994). The underlying support for the establishment of the FRCs was written in 1992.

Many families in today's society are stressed, and none more than families of children with special needs. All children, regardless of disability, belong with families and as part of communities. Support systems for families should strengthen the family's ability to care adequately for its members and promote family self-determination and self-sufficiency. Families communicate best with other families and profit from understanding assistance in dealing with service systems (Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth, 1992).

Objectives for the FRCs are to provide a single entry for parents to services, support, and training. Each provides a lending library of toys, books, videos, etc, along with opportunities to participate in a networking system which allows parents to learn from and through other parents. The FRCs are typically coordinated by a parent of a child with a disability.

The second priority of the OCCY is to train mediators to settle disputes between families and service providers. Early settlement centers, which have been established by law and are affiliated with the Oklahoma Supreme Court through the Administrative Office of the Courts, are provided in regional offices throughout Oklahoma. They offer all citizens convenient access to conflict settlement proceedings over a wide variety of issues, often avoiding costly lawsuits (Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth, 1994). Mediation is an effective way to help individuals who disagree to discuss the problem and come to a mutually acceptable resolution. The mediator does not judge or decide, but instead helps the parties find their own common ground. Mediation is not a substitute for legal help and no legal advice will be given by the mediator (Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth, 1994).

Experience has indicated that 85% of those persons completing the mediation process reach an agreement and over 90% of such agreements are kept by the parties (Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth, 1994).

The Oklahoma Disability Law Center is a statewide program providing free civil legal services to persons with developmental disabilities and individuals with mental illness. The Law Center's mission is to promote equality, full inclusion in society, and independence for people with disabilities by providing high quality services that protect and advance their rights (Novick, 1994).

Oklahoma Areawide Services Information System (OASIS) is a free information and referral service for children with special needs, infants and toddlers with developmental delays, and women, infants, children and adolescents with health needs. OASIS is reported to have the most up-to-date and accurate information on a variety of programs and services and can be used to locate and link parents, children, and professionals to services and resources that are available statewide; including advocacy, counseling, daycare, disability organizations, education financial assistance, medical services, parent support groups, parent-to-parent matching, prenatal care, respite care, and therapy (Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth, 1993).

Parents Reaching Out in Oklahoma, or more commonly known as "PRO-Oklahoma," is a statewide organization developed and coordinated by parents of individuals with disabilities. PRO-Oklahoma is sponsored by United Cerebral Palsy of Oklahoma and the U.S. Department of Education and Rehabilitative Services. PRO-

Oklahoma workshops provide information about specialized education and related laws, rights and responsibilities of parents, the assessment process, understanding the IEP, communication skills and strategies, transition, and the decision making process (Parents Reaching Out in Oklahoma, 1993). According to Rutledge (1994), 2,716 individuals contacted this parent agency for assistance during the 1993-94 school year. During that year, a total of 46 workshops across the state were attended by 683 people. Contact was also made with 7,149 participants in 145 other activities and events, such as conferences where there were additional speakers or agencies involved.

The Office of Handicapped Concerns (OCH) is an agency that typically provides information directly to the individual with a disability but will also provide counsel with parents of children with disabilities. According to Stokes (1994), the Director of the OCH, this agency also refers persons to other agencies and programs. While OCH has no program that specifically targets parents of children with disabilities, this office provides advocacy, client assistance, a disability newsletter, legislative hotline, employment development, information on government policies and programs, and technical assistance about barrier-free design (Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth, 1993).

Summary

To summarize this chapter, four key points have been discussed. The first is the evolution of public attitudes. The attitudes have ranged from ignoring and isolation to full inclusion in

all aspects of society. The second point is the development of the legal structure that created today's dilemma regarding appropriate ways and means of providing services. The third point made in this chapter is the general lack of specific research in regard to strategies educators can effectively use to inform and involve parents of children with disabilities. Finally, a variety of national and state programs were discussed that encouraged family involvement. It was pointed out that, in Oklahoma, family support has been identified as the highest priority by two pertinent agencies, yet only 11 community agencies have successfully developed family resource centers.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of this study was to assess parents' levels of knowledge of special education policies and laws and the degree of involvement they have in their children's educational programs. As noted in Chapter I, the study was guided by the null hypothesis that there would be no significant relationship between the level of parent knowledge about special education and the amount of parent involvement with the child's educational program. This chapter contains a description of the research design, including the population and sample, the instrument used to measure knowledge and involvement, and the manner in which the data were collected and analyzed.

Population and Sample

The focus of this study was directed to parents of individuals who were between the ages of 3 and 21 years and for whom current Individual Education Programs (IEPs) had been approved. The sample was to be selected at random from the population of parents of the 1,710 such children in the 25 school districts that were members of the Special Services Co-op in a rural area of central Oklahoma. Each district had a current child count form that consisted of a roster of students with IEPs. The form is annually certified by

the Oklahoma State Department of Education and is then used in the verification of eligibility for various federal and state revenue allocations. Each record contains complete and systematic data including county number, school district number, age, race, grade level, primary disability, secondary disability, last name (first three letters), first letter of first name, date of birth, and gender. Ten percent of the records on the December 1993 Child Count Certified Register were to be selected in each school district to identify the parent sample for the study.

As noted, 25 school districts comprise the membership of the Special Services Co-op. It was anticipated that every district would be included in the study. The person designated in each Local Education Agency District Plan for Special Education in Oklahoma as being responsible for the administration of special education programs in that district received instructions by mail and by telephone regarding the project and the procedures for selection of the sample and handling of the data. An emphasis was placed on the maintenance of confidentiality through the activities of these "designated persons."

Each district had a certified copy of its completed Child Count form for December 1993. A random sample of 10% of the total child count population was to be selected in each district. The designated person was instructed to select numbered slips of paper from a container and then match the selections with the record numbers of the students. Each selected student's record number was then recorded as the code for tracking purposes. The code sheet was

completed by the designated person and a copy was mailed to the researcher.

The original intent was to have 171 packets distributed by area designated persons responsible for special education. This figure represented 10% of the total regional December 1993 certified child count number for 25 school districts in five counties. One hundred thirty-four (134) child count data records, or 8% of the total population of students with IEP's, were completed by the designated person responsible for special education. This constituted a 78% return for child count information; and thus will be considered the sample for the study. Of the 134 surveys given to parents, ninety-six (96) were returned to the researcher; consequently, a final return rate of 72% was achieved from 20 school districts in five counties (Table I). Five schools elected not to participate or did not return the instruments by the deadline set by the researcher.

Instrument

The Special Education Knowledge Assessment instrument (see Appendix B) was developed to identify the levels of knowledge of parents of children with disabilities. The individual items were developed from federal regulations associated with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Oklahoma Policies and Procedures for Special Education, case law, and input from experts in the field of special education (Appendix B also contains the answer key for the IDEA Knowledge Assessment).

The first 10 items were taken directly from the list of parent rights which the parent receives two times prior to the first IEP

meeting. The Parent Rights Form (See Appendix A) was developed by the Oklahoma State Department of Education, Special Education Section, and approved by the Office of Special Education Programs in Washington, DC. Before a child can initially be placed in special education, a referral form must be signed by the parent and a notification of meeting form is sent to the parent. Both forms are required to have a copy of the Parent Rights attached. The Parent Rights Form must be provided in the parent's native mode of communication and can be read to the parent at the parent's request.

Items 11 through 20 are intended to measure the parent's comprehension of policies and procedures in Oklahoma. The topics were taken from major subjects found in the manual, Oklahoma Policies and Procedures for Special Education. The focus of the questions was developed as an outgrowth of knowledge. In other words, the respondent must be knowledgeable of the applicable policy and/or procedure in order to accurately decide if the question is true or false.

The final section of the instrument contains 10 items relative to application of the the law. The items deal with case law and an application, or interpretation, of statutes. These case law items were taken directly from major U.S. Supreme Court cases, federal regulations, legal references, and/or the policies and procedures for special education in the Oklahoma manual.

The instrument was scored with three subscales and a total knowledge score in order to identify the knowledge levels of parents participating in the study. The three subscales consisted of scores on the 10 items regarding information, 10 items regarding

comprehension, and 10 items regarding application of knowledge. A total knowledge score of 30 points could thus be obtained.

The Participant Information Instrument (See Appendix C) was designed to obtain demographic data regarding the parents as well as to identify their involvement with their children's educational programs. Items in the first section were used to ask parents to indicate their gender, relationship to the students (parent, foster parent, guardian, or surrogate parent), the number of years the students have been in special education, age, and highest level of education completed. The true-false section of the Participant Information form has 30 items which were designed to measure the involvement of parents of children with disabilities. The items were developed from federal regulations associated with IDEA, the Oklahoma Policies and Procedures for Special Education, and input from experts in the field of special education.

Ten items interspersed throughout the instrument were intended to determine the manner in which parents might be involved in active roles specifically related to their children's educational programs. These questions were personalized and specific. The number of items 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 11, 15, 16, 17, and 18 scored true (T) provided the foundation level of involvement. Ten other items were designed to rate the understanding or comprehension of the parent in regard to disabilities in general. It was assumed that, in order to mark true to these statements, the parent must have taken the initiative to get involved outside of the family system. Items 5, 6, 7, 10, 12, 13, 14, 19, 25, and 26 were meant to explore this second level of involvement. The final 10

items required parents to apply knowledge to make the statement true. The items 8, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, and 30 were designed to determine the parents' level of involvement with legal issues, including contact with other agencies or use of dispute resolution techniques. Since a response of true indicated the greater involvement for each of the 30 items, the maximum score obtainable on the participant information assessment was 30, indicating the highest level of involvement.

The instruments were reviewed for validity and reliability by a panel of experts. The experts were all actively involved in the development, monitoring, and/or implementation of special education policies and procedures in Oklahoma. The instruments were mailed to representatives from the Oklahoma Disability Law Center, the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth, Pro-Oklahoma , OASIS, the Stroud and Cushing Regional Education Service Centers, and the Oklahoma Directors of Special Services, a professional association of special education administrators. Input was also secured from two university professors, two practicing special education teachers, two practicing special education directors, two parents of children with disabilities, and the Executive Director of the Oklahoma State Department of Education Special Education Section.

Members of the panel of experts were asked to examine the content of the instruments and to confirm the importance of the knowledge and participant involvement of parents of children eligible for special education. Input from panel members was incorporated in a revision of the instruments.

The revised instruments were then administered to 15 parents who had not been selected to be in the sample. In order to examine reliability, the instruments were re-administered to the same parents two-to-three weeks later. These individuals were asked to not only complete the instruments but to provide feedback regarding the time needed for completion, the clarity of instructions, and the degree to which items could be read and understood. The final versions of the instruments were constructed with revisions based upon this input.

Data Collection

As noted previously, a "designated person" was identified in each participating school district. These individuals selected a random sample of parents by use of their districts' special education child count forms and then used a numerical code to identify the parent who had signed each student's IEP. The appropriate number of packets were provided to each designated person and the appropriate code number was written on each packet. Each parent was then contacted and asked by the designated person to make arrangements to meet with that individual to complete the packet in his or her presence. The parent was asked to insert the completed packet in the provided stamped envelope and seal it. The designated person then mailed the envelopes to the researcher.

Each packet contained a cover sheet explaining the packet (see Appendix D), a Survey Participant Consent Form (Appendix E), the Participant Information form, the Special Education Knowledge Assessment instrument, and one stamped envelope for the

designated person to use to return the completed instruments to the researcher for scoring. As the packets were received and scored, followup contact was made with the designated person to identify and obtain an explanation for any missing packets.

This study was designed to also include a qualitative procedure involving parent interviews. Following the entry and analysis of data, 12 parents were identified who were representative of the groups identified as High-High, High-Low, Low-High, and Low-Low based on scores, with knowledge being the first variable and involvement being the second. Three code numbers of participants were randomly selected from each of the four groups. The researcher then contacted the designated persons associated with the selected coded responses. An Interview Participant Consent Form (see Appendix F) was addressed and mailed by the designated person to each parent selected. The Consent Forms contained blank lines to allow the parent to indicate whether, and the manner in which, they wished to be contacted for an interview. The options for the interview were by personal visit or by telephone contact, both to be done at the time and place chosen by the parent. The consent form was to be mailed directly back to the researcher. The following accommodations were anticipated as possibly being necessary.

(a) conducting interviews in a language other than English, on request; (b) traveling to the participant's home; (c) meeting outside the home on request; and (d) contacting families by telephone, mail, or on-site visit to made arrangements for their participation (Sontag & Schacht, 1994. p. 424).

The interviews were conducted solely by the researcher in order to maintain consistency in questions, follow-up, and documentation. Each interview was audio-taped and then transcribed by the researcher (see examples in Appendix G). Only two questions were deemed to be basic to the interview, one offering an opportunity for the parents to talk about the ways in which they were involved with their children's educational programs and one questioning the parents' personal opinions regarding the importance of knowledge of legal provisions regarding the provision of education and other services to person with disabilities. Possible follow-up questions were used to enable the parent to clarify, expand upon, and/or explain responses. Interview data were then reviewed in an attempt to identify common themes and perceptions among the interviewees in order to form general recommendations and summary statements.

The designated persons, being made fully aware of confidentiality policies and procedures and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, maintained the complete records and code names in secure locations. They were the only persons having access to the coded list of names. The researcher was thus unaware of the identity of any subject until that individual voluntarily provided personal information to the researcher through the Participant Consent Form used for the interviews. All of the data collection activities described herein were done in accordance with and with the approval of the Institutional Review Board of Oklahoma State University.

Data Analysis

The data from the instruments were recorded and scored using SYSTAT 5.2, a microcomputer program designed for statistical analysis. Demographic data were analyzed using frequency distributions and other descriptive statistics to describe the sample. Pearson Correlation coefficients were calculated to determine the strength of the linear relationship between parent knowledge and parent participation as identified through the instruments. The significance of all statistical tests was determined at a Type I error of .05. Analysis of variance using the means model was then computed to examine the relationships between knowledge and involvement and the demographic data.

The interview data were analyzed to develop common themes or perceptions as to the parents' thoughts and ideas regarding knowledge of special education law and involvement in their children's special education programs. The accrued goal was to identify or enhance strategies which might result in an increase of parent knowledge and involvement.

Summary

The population for this study consisted of parents of individuals who were between the ages of 3 and 21 years and for whom current IEPs had been approved. Ten percent of the records on the December 1993 Child Count Certified Register forms from 20 school districts were randomly selected to identify subjects for this

study. Two true-false instruments were then completed by the selected subjects. One 30-item instrument was designed to obtain information regarding parents' levels of knowledge about special education. The other 30-item instrument was scored to measure parents' levels of involvement in their children's educational programs. Both instruments graduated in difficulty to provide three subscores in addition to a total score for each instrument. The collection of the data was assisted by a designated person in each district who was selected to maintain confidentiality and to provide the required data to the researcher. Using SYSTAT 5.2, the Pearson Correlation coefficient was calculated to determine the strength of the linear relationship between parent knowledge and parent involvement. Interviews were then conducted with selected participants who had volunteered for such involvement. The findings of the analyses of data from the instruments and the interviews are reported in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter presents an analysis of the collected data. The analysis of data was based on the responses to the Participant Information and the Special Education Knowledge Assessment instruments by 96 parents of individuals with disabilities. Demographic data were also collected in order to provide a general description of the respondents who participated in the study in addition to their children with disabilities. Additional data were obtained through interviews with 12 of the respondents.

The results of the quantitative portion of this study are reported in this chapter, divided by topics: demographic information, testing of the hypotheses, item descriptions of the instruments, analysis of various factors regarding involvement and/or knowledge, conclusions of the quantitative component of the study in reference to research questions. The final portion of this chapter is used to report findings of the qualitative segment of the study, including identification of common themes and perceptions of interviewees. The final two research questions are used to focus the summation and analysis of interviews responses.

Demographic Information

As noted in Chapter III, designated persons in 20 of the 25 originally selected school districts distributed 134 instrument packets to randomly selected parents of students with disabilities. A total of 96 packets were returned, a rate of 72%. Table I is used to summarize the response data by grade level of the students with disabilities. A follow-up telephone contact was made to identify the reasons five designated persons did not distribute packets and to seek assistance in obtaining more responses. Comments made by these school personnel included the following. "I'm simply swamped with paper work and can't get to it this month." "I feel like I let you down; we just didn't get a response from the parents." "I tried many times to get the parent to come up; she just wouldn't show." "I gave the packet to the counselor at the elementary school because I was too busy, then her mother got sick, then she got a migraine and ended up in the hospital." "I forgot all about it. It is here on my desk somewhere."

Demographic data were obtained by the designated persons from the 134 child count records. Table II contains a summary of the findings of that review. These data indicate that the children of parents in the sample had an age range from 3 years to 19 years with 12 years being the mean age. Nearly two thirds of the individuals with disabilities whose parents were selected as part of the sample were male. Four of every five students were Caucasian. Data from the child count records were used to compare incidence of primary disability by category with state and national data (see

TABLE I
POPULATION, SAMPLE, AND NUMBER
OF RESPONDENT PARENTS

Grade Level of Parents' Students	Total Population	Number in Sample	Number of Respondents	Response Rate
Elementary	973	78	62	79%
Secondary	737	56	34	60%
Totals	1710	134	96	72%

TABLE II
 GENDER AND RACE OF SAMPLE PARENTS
 OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Category	Number	Percent
Gender:		
Male	88	66%
Female	46	34%
<hr/>		
Totals	134	100%
<hr/>		
Race:		
Caucasian	107	80%
American Indian	19	14%
African American	7	5%
Other	1	1%
<hr/>		
Totals	134	100%

TABLE III

PRIMARY DISABILITIES OF
CHILDREN OF SAMPLE PARENTS
AND COMPARATIVE PERCENTAGES

Primary Disability	Number	Percent	Oklahoma	National*
Deaf/Hard of Hearing	1	1%	<1%	1%
Speech Impaired	17	12%	21%	23%
Visually Impaired	1	1%	<1%	<1%
Emotional Disturbed	3	2%	3%	9%
Health Impaired	1	1%	<1%	1%
Learning Disabilities	60	45%	49%	49%
Multiple Disabilities	8	6%	2%	2%
Developmental Delay	9	7%	7% †	N/A †
Mental Retardation	34	25%	16%	13%
Other	0	0%	<1%	>1%
Totals	134	100%	100%	100%
Numbers Served (Ages 3-21)			67,917	4,927,674

† Data are not reported at national level for this category. This Oklahoma percentage was reported by the Oklahoma State Department of Education (1994).

*Source: Capitol Publications, Inc., (1993).

Table III). Among all three groups, learning disabilities, mental retardation, and speech impairments accounted for most (82%-86%) disabilities. While the total of those three categories were similar, the sample data showed a considerable higher percentage of students with mental retardation and a corresponding lower percentage for speech impaired. Multiple disabilities also accounted for a higher percentage in the sample than in the comparison groups.

A review of the demographic data obtained from the 96 respondents who completed the instruments for this study is provided in Table IV. Other data indicate that the ages of the parents ranged from 25 years of age to 69 years of age, with a mean of 39 and a median of 37. The number of years their children had been in special education ranged from 1 year to 19 years, with 5 years being the mean and 4 the median. The typical respondent could be described as a female high school graduate who was the natural mother of the child with a disability. Only one respondent in nine was male and only one in four had formal education beyond high school.

Testing of Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were used to examine the relationship between involvement and knowledge.

- Null Hypotheses: There will be no significant relationship between the level of parent knowledge about special education and the amount of parent involvement with the child's educational program.

TABLE IV

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FOR
RESPONDENT PARENTS

Category	Number	Percent
Gender:		
Male	11	12%
Female	85	88%
Total:	96	100%
Years Respondent's child has been in special education:		
Zero - Two	31	32%
Three - Five	24	26%
Six - Eight	7	7%
More than Eight	34	35%
Total:	96	100%
Level of Education:		
Less than high school	15	15%
High school diploma	56	59%
Post-secondary training	16	17%
College graduate	4	4%
Post-graduate	5	5%
Total:	96	100%
Relationship to Student:		
Parent	88	92%
Foster Parent	2	2%
Guardian	6	6%
Surrogate Parent	0	0%
Total:	96	100%

- Directional Hypothesis: There will be a significant positive relationship between the level of parent knowledge about special education and the amount of parent involvement with the child's educational program.

Since involvement and knowledge variables were used, both were analyzed by the Pearsons Product Moment Correlation Coefficient equation to determine the strength of the relationship. As shown in Table V, the analysis determined that there was a statistically significant relationship between total involvement and total knowledge. Consequently, the null hypotheses was rejected and the directional hypotheses was confirmed. Statistically significant correlations were also found between each set of total scores and the Levels I and II subscores of the other variable.

Based on the results displayed in Table V, it can be seen that Level 1 and Level 2 involvement did correlate significantly to the total knowledge level. Although not a strong relationship, the parent's involvement at the foundation or personalized level was found to have a statistically significant correlation to knowledge. Less strong but still significant, was the relationship of total knowledge to involvement at the second level which represents involvement with family, administrators, other parents, and teachers. Level 3 type of involvement, including such activity as contact with outside agencies, was not found to have a statistically significant correlation to total knowledge. The results shown in Table V, also show a statistically significant correlation exists between total involvement and knowledge at both the Level 1, which is basically

TABLE V

PEARSON PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATION COEFFICIENT MODEL

	Involvement 1	Involvement 2	Involvement 3	Total Involvement	Knowledge 1	Knowledge 2	Knowledge 3	Total Knowledge
Involvement 1		0.578 (.96) 0.000*	0.529 (.96) 0.000*	0.800 (.96) 0.000*	0.368 (.96) 0.000*	0.368 (.96) 0.000*	0.228 (.926) 0.025*	0.432 (.96) 0.000*
Involvement 2			0.664 (.96) 0.000*	0.856 (.96) 0.000*	0.407 (.96) 0.000*	0.248 (.96) 0.015*	0.076 (.96) 0.461	0.315 (.96) 0.002*
Involvement 3				0.894 (.96) 0.000*	0.290 (.96) 0.004*	0.163 (.96) 0.114	-0.032 (.96) 0.759	0.186 (.96) 0.070
Total Involvement					0.405 (.96) 0.000*	0.289 (.96) 0.004*	0.087 (.96) 0.397	0.344 (.96) 0.001*
Knowledge 1						0.378 (.96) 0.000*	0.177 (.96) 0.085	0.665 (.96) 0.000*
Knowledge 2							0.415 (.96) 0.000*	0.824 (.96) 0.000*
Knowledge 3								0.727 (.96) 0.000*
Total Knowledge								

* Significant at the .05 level

an understanding the Parent's Rights, and Level 2 which required comprehension of policies and procedures, subscales of knowledge.

As might be expected, statistically significant ($p < .05$) correlations were found between the various pairs of individual subscales of involvement and between the subscales and total involvement. The same was found in regard to knowledge except that there was no significant relationship found between Levels 1 and 3 of knowledge.

The results that are presented in Table VI indicate that, as would be anticipated, the mean scores on the knowledge subscales declined as the level of expected knowledge increased. The respondent parents were thus more knowledgeable in regard to the Parents' Rights than to caselaw decisions or legal mandate's terminology and requirements. On the other hand, the mean scores on the involvement subscales did not show the same progression from Level 1 to Level 3. In fact, these parents showed greater involvement at Level 2 than at Level 1, indicating they are involved beyond the basic expectations of parents. Level 2 items indicate involvement through interpersonal relationships with their child's teacher or school administrator; over 93% of the respondents indicated they understood forms they were asked to sign and would ask a question if they did not understand something.

TABLE VI

DIRECTIONAL INCREASE OF KNOWLEDGE AND INVOLVEMENT

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
Involvement Level 1	6.73	1.78	1.0	10.0
Involvement Level 2	7.33	1.63	3.0	10.0
Involvement Level 3	4.19	2.49	0.0	10.0
Total Involvement	18.23	5.11	6.0	30.0
Knowledge Level 1	7.49	1.67	2.0	10.0
Knowledge Level 2	6.35	1.99	1.0	10.0
Knowledge Level 3	5.91	1.91	0.0	10.0
Total Knowledge	19.76	4.15	7.0	30.0

Item Descriptions of the Instrument

This section contains a breakdown of the survey instruments to identify commonalities among the respondents. Refer to Appendix B and C for the complete instrument. Note in Appendix B, which includes the Special Education Knowledge Assessment instrument and the Special Education Knowledge Assessment Answer Key that the percentage of respondents answering correctly is included at the end of each explanation, and the difference between that and 100% is comprised of both wrong answers and those respondents giving no responses. In Appendix C, both percentages of true and false are provided in the Summary of Results of the Involvement Instrument.

Through an analysis of Involvement Level 1, it was found that items 11, 17, and 18 scored the highest response. Over 90% of the respondents indicated they understood how their child's disability affects his/her educational performance, and they noted not only did they know what their child was learning in school but also helped

with homework. The lowest ranking item (11%) in Involvement Level 1 was those respondents who had watched a video about their child's disability, which was item 3.

Involvement Level 2, as noted in Table VI and confirmed by a detailed analysis of Appendix C, was found to get the highest marks of true responses. Nearly all (98%) of the respondents indicated on item 26 they would ask a question when they do not understand a term or word while 93% of the respondents do understand the purpose of the special education forms they are asked to sign (item 12). When asked if they talked to their child's family members about disabilities in item 13, 89% responded that they did. Although a high percentage indicated that they were involved at this level, a low 14% indicated they were a member of an organization that provided information about disabilities (item 5).

Involvement Level 3 revealed the lowest scores of the instrument. Only 59% of the respondents have talked with professionals outside the school system (item 20). A little over half of the respondents were aware of finding and obtaining legal assistance (items 23, 24, and 30). The lowest reported score for Involvement Level 3 was the 15% who have talked with PRO-Oklahoma staff about parent rights (item 22).

A close examination of the Knowledge scores reveals an anticipated progression; more respondents answered Knowledge Level 1 items correctly than Level 2. Knowledge Level 3 items received the fewest correct scores. Over 96% of the respondents knew that they could inspect and review their child's records and request copies (item 3). That same percentage knew they must give

consent before the preplacement evaluation (item 1). At the other end of the Knowledge Level 1 scores was the lowest ranking item 6 indicating that only 47% of the respondents knew that an independent evaluation could be obtained at public expense.

The highest scores on Knowledge Level 2 were 80-86%. Items 18, 11, and 13 received the highest markings. This indicated that the respondents understood timelines regarding IEPs and transcript or report card grades. Knowledge Level 2 item 20 received the lowest score. Only 31% knew that a school could transfer personally identifiable and confidential records to the school in which the student seeks to enroll without written parent permission if they had a FERPA policy in effect.

Items 26 and 30 in the Knowledge Level 3 section both had 89% respond correctly to the following: adaptive behavior from both home and school must be considered by the multidisciplinary team and unilateral placement by parents cannot get tuition reimbursement. Most (86%) of the respondents correctly marked that the IEP should be reasonably calculated to enable the child to achieve passing marks and advance from grade to grade. Knowledge Level 3 item 25 received a total of 33% of the respondents correctly responding to the question that if a student is eligible for the category of LD, it means he/she does not have to go into the LD lab for at least 30 minutes per day.

Analysis of Variance

The next step was to further analyze selected demographic variables and their relationship to the independent variables of

knowledge and involvement. The remainder of this portion of the chapter is used to report ANOVA through a Means Model. The variables used were children's school level, parents' level of education levels, number of years the respondents' children have been involved in special education, and the degree of severity of the child's disabilities. The independent variable was total knowledge or total involvement scores. The remaining variables gender, parent's age, and race were analyzed but due to the small cell size or prevalence of one type the results were skewed.

Table VII indicates that a statistically significant relationship exists between the child's grade level, elementary or secondary, and the total knowledge level of the parent. In an analysis of the least squares means, it was determined that the parent of the elementary grade child is more knowledgeable than is the parent of the secondary student.

TABLE VII

MEANS MODEL ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE
FOR CHILDREN'S LEVELS OF SCHOOLING
WITH AN INDEPENDENT VARIABLE OF TOTAL KNOWLEDGE

Source	Sum-Of-Squares	DF	Mean-Square	F-Ratio	P
Grade	95.7918	1	95.7918	5.8482	0.018*
Error	1539.6978	94	16.3798		

LEAST SQUARES MEANS

Grade Level	L S Mean	SE	N
Elementary: Preschool - sixth	20.5690	0.5314	58
Secondary: Seventh - twelfth	18.5263	0.6565	38

*Significant at the .05 level

Based on the results of Table VIII, it can be noted that there is a statistically significant relationship between the level of formal education of the parent and that parent's knowledge level regarding special education legal provisions. A study of the least squared means indicated a positive progression of education level and total knowledge scores.

TABLE VIII

MEANS MODEL ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR PARENTS'
EDUCATION LEVEL WITH AN INDEPENDENT VARIABLE
OF TOTAL KNOWLEDGE

Source	Sum-Of-Squares	DF	Mean-Square	F-Ratio	P
Ed. Level	342.5275	4	85.6319	5.9751	0.0003*
Error	1289.8304	90	14.3314		

LEAST SQUARES MEANS

Education Level	LS Mean	SE	N
1 (Less than High School)	15.857	1.012	14
2 (High school diploma)	19.786	0.506	56
3 (Post secondary)	21.563	0.946	16
4 (College graduate)	22.250	1.893	4
5 (Post Graduate)	23.000	1.693	5

*Significant at the .05 level

Based on the results of the ANOVA in Table IX and Table X, it is revealed that there is no statistically significant relationship between the number of years the respondents had been involved with their child in special education and the level of involvement or the level of knowledge of the parent. The Least Squares Means are reported to reveal the number of cases reported at each year and to note the variance between means.

TABLE IX

MEANS MODEL ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR CHILDRENS' NUMBER OF
YEARS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION WITH AN INDEPENDENT VARIABLE
OF PARENTS' TOTAL INVOLVEMENT SCORES

Source	Sum-Of-Squares	DF	Mean Square	F-Ratio	P
Years in Special Ed.	414.4713	12	34.5393	1.3846	0.1898
Error	2070.4870	83	24.9456		

LEAST SQUARES MEANS

Years in special education	LS Mean	SE	N
one	17.0000	1.5059	11
two	17.4000	1.1168	20
three	20.3636	1.5059	11
four	17.5455	1.5059	11
five	18.4000	2.2336	5
six	16.8571	1.3349	14
seven	17.5000	2.0390	6
eight	23.0000	2.8836	3
nine	20.0000	1.8878	7
ten	8.0000	4.9946	1
eleven	25.0000	3.5317	2
twelve	20.0000	2.4973	4
thirteen	18.0000	4.9946	1

*Significance at the .05 level

TABLE X

MEANS MODEL ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR CHILDRENS' NUMBER OF YEARS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION WITH AN INDEPENDENT VARIABLE OF PARENTS' TOTAL KNOWLEDGE SCORES

Source	Sum-Of-Squares	DF	Mean Square	F-Ratio	P
Years in Special Ed.	233.2298	12	19.4358	1.1504	0.3324
Error	1402.2597	83	16.8947		

LEAST SQUARES MEANS

Years in special education	LS Mean	SE	N
one	21.0909	1.2393	11
two	20.1500	0.9191	20
three	21.4545	1.2393	11
four	19.0909	1.2393	11
five	17.6000	1.8382	5
six	19.2143	1.0985	14
seven	17.1667	1.6780	6
eight	17.6667	2.3731	3
nine	20.1429	1.5536	7
ten	19.0000	4.1103	1
eleven	24.5000	2.9064	2
twelve	20.2500	2.0552	4
thirteen	13.0000	4.1103	1

*Significance at the .05 level

Based on the results of the ANOVA in Table XI, a statistically significant relationship is noted between the primary category of disability and the parents' total involvement scores. The primary categories of disability were ranked as follows: Learning Disabilities and Speech Impaired were considered in Group 1; all other categories were considered as Group 2. According to the least squares means, the parents of the children in Group 2 were involved to a statistically significant greater degree than were the parents of the children

identified as eligible for the category of Learning Disabilities or Speech Impaired (group 1).

TABLE XI

MEANS MODEL ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR CHILDRENS' PRIMARY CATEGORY OF DISABILITY WITH AN INDEPENDENT VARIABLE OF PARENTS' TOTAL INVOLVEMENT SCORES

Source	Sum-of-Squares	DF	Mean-Square	F-Ratio	P
Primary Disability	113.3690	1	113.3690	4.4935	0.0367*
Error	2371.5894	94	25.2297		

LEAST SQUARES MEANS					
Category of Primary Disability	LS Means	SE	N		
Group 1: Learning Disabilities and Speech Impaired	17.2909	0.6773	55		
Group 2: All other categories	19.4878	0.7844	41		

* Significant at the .05 level

As noted in Table XII, a statistically significant relationship was discovered between primary category of disability and parents' total involvement score. Based on the results of this ANOVA in Table XII, no statistically significant relationship exists between the primary category of disability and the parents' total knowledge score. The primary categories of disabilities were ranked the same as in Table XI for the analysis.

TABLE XII

MEANS MODEL ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR CHILDRENS' PRIMARY
CATEGORY OF DISABILITY WITH AN INDEPENDENT VARIABLE OF
PARENTS' TOTAL KNOWLEDGE SCORES

Source	Sum-of-Squares	DF	Mean-Square	F-Ratio	P
Primary Disability	54.6319	1	54.6319	3.2485	0.0747
Error	1580.8576	94	16.8170		

LEAST SQUARES MEANS

Category of Primary Disability	LS Means	SE	N
Group 1: Learning Disabilities and Speech Impaired	19.1091	0.5530	55
Group 2: All other categories	20.6341	0.6405	41

* Significant at the .05 level

Analysis of Qualitative Component

Following the analysis of quantitative data 12 parents were identified, three each as representative of the four groups identified as High-High, High-Low, Low-High, and Low-Low with total knowledge score being the initial variable and total involvement score being the second. Score cutoff for High or Low eligibility was based on the position from the mean. Three code numbers were randomly selected from each quadrant. The researcher then contacted the designated persons in the appropriate school districts. An Interview Participant Consent Form (Appendix F) provided to the designated persons for each of the 12 parents, to be addressed and mailed to the parents selected. The Consent Form contains blank lines to allow the parent to recommend the way in which they

wished to be contacted for the interview. The consent forms were then mailed by the parents back to the researcher. The following accommodations were anticipated:

"(a) conducting interviews in a language other than English, on request; (b) traveling to the participant's home; (c) meeting outside the home on request; and (d) contacting families by telephone, mail, or on-site visit to made arrangements for their participation" (Sontag, 1994. p. 424).

However, it was not necessary to conduct any interview in a language other than English. The interviewees included: 10 females and 2 males, and 5 parents who had children in secondary schools and 7 parents whose children were in elementary schools. Three of the parents had children with mild disabilities, three with moderate disabilities, and six parents were interviewed whose children were considered severely disabled. Ten were natural parents, one was a grandparent/guardian, and one was a foster/surrogate parent. The age range of the interviewees' was from 29 to 69 years of age. These interviewees children' ages ranged from 3 to 17 years.

Two interviews were conducted in the participants' homes, three interviews were completed outside the home at the parent's request. Three were done at the office of the researcher. The last four interviews were conducted, by parent request, by telephone. Only the first four of the parents' conversations were recorded (see Appendix G for excerpts of transcriptions). While interviewing 1 and 3, the researcher noted caution and hesitancy on the part of the interviewee. Because the researcher had had previous contact with the parents being interviewed; and consequently detected a concern about using the recorder, a second contact with interviewee 1 and 3,

noted that the recording did effect the responses. (See Excerpt 3(2) in Appendix G). Handwritten notes were used for the remaining interviews. The interviews were administered solely by the researcher in order to maintain consistency in questioning, follow-up, and documentation. Only two questions were basic to the interview; one offered an opportunity to tell ways the parent was involved with the child's educational program and one was used to obtain personal opinions regarding the importance of knowledge of legal provisions regarding the disabled. Follow-up questions were used to clarify, expand, or explain responses.

- Do parents perceive that greater involvement leads to more knowledge and/or that more knowledge leads to greater involvement?

Common themes and perceptions among the interviewees tended to agree on the thought that knowing and understanding the legal provisions of special education were very important for the parent. One interviewee who was in the High-High group said that she learned about the field of special education before she could get involved through the foster parenting process, but she felt she had learned so much more now that she was able to use the information. Another High-High parent said, "Yes, I learn alot at each meeting, and I understand the law. My child has been in special education a long time and by now we have lots of people to ask questions to if need be." A parent in the High-Low group said, "If I need to know anything or have a question, I just go ask my [child's] teacher." These interview respondents corresponded to the item analysis of the surveys, in particular to items 13 (87%) and 26 (98%) of the

Involvement instrument. The group scoring High-High, High-Low, and Low-High generally said they felt involved with their child's educational program and understood the special education forms they were asked to sign. These same interviewees tended to express satisfaction when asked about issues regarding involvement and/or legal provisions. The group scoring Low-Low acknowledged they did not understand the reason for so many forms and why the meetings took so long. One Low-Low parent said, "They never ask me anything at those meetings, all they want is me to sign the paper, so alot of time, I don't go - the teacher just sends the paper home, I sign, and send it back."

- What types of activities do parents view as most beneficial in increasing their levels of knowledge regarding special education?

According to the interviews, parents generally indicated a secure connection with the school teacher and school administrator. It is worthy to note that most parents felt that their child's teacher knew all about special education and the legal provisions and they preferred obtaining information and asking questions to someone with whom they were familiar. One parent interview suggested that she "needs it all, wants to be more involved, but was too ill at this point in time." This parent scored in the Low-Low group. A parent representing the High-High group indicated that she had watched many films and read many books and magazines about disabilities, and stated that she would like to have more. One parent in the Low-High group stated that she didn't know of any videos or information available about her son's learning disability. She continued to say

she didn't have a VCR machine to watch videos and really didn't have the time or desire to read books.

Summary

To summarize this chapter, the responses from the data analysis to the research questions posed in Chapter I are noted below.

- How much knowledge do parents of children with disabilities have regarding the legal provisions governing services to such children?

The range of correct responses on individual items in the Special Education Knowledge Assessment instrument was from 31% to 97%. 74% of the parents marked the correct answers in Knowledge Level 1. 63% of the parents marked the correct answers in Knowledge Level 2. The Knowledge Level 3 obtained a correct percentage of 61%. The total scores ranged from answering seven items correctly (23%) to answering all 30 items correctly (100%). Two-thirds or approximately 66% of the parents who scored the Special Education Knowledge Assessment instrument answered the questions correctly.

- How much involvement do parents of children with disabilities have in the educational programs provided to their children?

The scores on the Involvement Rating ranged from 11% to 98%. Appendix C contains the actual survey. Following the survey is a quick summary of the instrument that has been rearranged according to the questions measuring the three Levels of

Involvement. Included in the left column under the T and F are percentage of respondents marking for each question.

Level I Involvement concluded with an average of 67% of the parents surveyed indicating involvement in the basic foundation components of parenting. Level II Involvement scores required seeking information or indicated comprehension of disabilities. An average of 73% of the participants surveyed marked an involvement at this level. Level III Involvement received a average score of 40% showing a lower number of parents seeking help from outside agencies or legal assistance.

- Is there a relationship between the level of knowledge and the degree of involvement?

According to the data analysis, there is a statistically significant relationship between the parents' levels of knowledge and their levels of involvement. The quantitative component of this study was not designed to identify the causal relationship.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND COMMENTARY

The major purposes of this chapter are to present a summary of the results of the research, to state the conclusions, and to suggest recommendations for practice and for future research. The final portion of the chapter was used to provide an opportunity for the researcher to include a commentary on the research.

Summary

As noted in the review of literature, the trend across the nation has been for government to require educators to make efforts to involve and to educate parents of children with disabilities. The problem is determining whether or not those in schools and other agencies are making effective provisions to meet the intent of the law rather than minimal efforts to meet the letter of the law. The purpose of this study was to assess parents' levels of knowledge of special education policies and laws and the degree of involvement they have in their children's educational programs. It was anticipated that this study might provide information that would enable and empower parents to advocate more effectively for their children and strengthen their ability to participate fully as partners

on their children's educational teams. This research was thus designed to determine the strength of relationship between parent involvement and knowledge level of legal provisions in special education. It was hypothesized that a positive relationship would exist; that parents who reported higher levels of involvement levels would also have higher knowledge and vice versa.

The population for this study consisted of parents of individuals who were between the ages of 3 and 21 years and for whom current IEPs had been approved within the 25 school districts in a special education cooperative in central Oklahoma. Designated persons in 20 of those districts used the December 1993 Child Count Certified Register forms to randomly select 10% of the population as subjects for this study. Two instruments were provided to those parents in the sample. One 30-question instrument was designed to obtain information regarding levels of knowledge about special education. The other 30-question instrument scored parents' levels of involvement. Both instruments graduated in difficulty to provide three subscores in addition to a total score for each instrument. The collection of the data was assisted by designated persons in each district who were responsible for confidentiality and providing required data to the researcher. Using SYSTAT 5.2, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient and ANOVAs were calculated to determine the strength of relationship between parent knowledge and parent involvement.

The final demographics of this study included data on 134 students with disabilities and 96 respondent parents, signifying a return rate of 72%. Demographic data obtained from child count

records indicated that the students ranged in age from 3 years to 19 years. Two thirds of the students were male, while 80% were Caucasian, 58% were in elementary schools, and their disabilities ranged from mild to severe disabling conditions with learning disabilities, mental retardation and speech impairments accounting for 82% of the disabilities.

The demographic data obtained from the parents indicated an age range of 25 years to 69 years, while 88% were female, and 91% were the natural parents of the children with disabilities. The number of years their children had been in special education ranged from 1 year to 19 years. The majority of the respondents held a high school diploma.

The analysis revealed that there was a statistically significant relationship between parents' knowledge of special education law and policies and their involvement in their children's educational programs. The demographic factors that did significantly correlate to knowledge and involvement were grade level of the child and education level of the parent. The severity of the disability did not significantly correlate with the involvement level of the parent. No significant relationship was identified between the level of severity of the child's disability and the total score of parent knowledge. It was determined that the number of years the parents had been involved in special education had no impact on involvement nor knowledge levels.

According to the findings of the qualitative component of this study, the common themes and perceptions generally corresponded with the quantitative portion of the study. Interviewees all agreed

that understanding the legal provisions of special education was important. All parents except one indicated that they thought they were involved as much as they wanted to be. The one parent in disagreement was very ill and thus was not able to get more involved.

Conclusions

1. A relationship exists between the level of involvement and the amount of knowledge regarding special education of the parents of children with disabilities. The analysis of the collected data indicated that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the two variables.

2. Parents with higher levels of formal education are more knowledgeable regarding statutory and policy provisions regarding special education. Not only was there a statistically significant correlation between education level and total knowledge scores but by examining the least squared means, it was determined that there is a positive progression within the relationship. As the formal education level of the parent increased, so did the total knowledge score on the instrument. The two parents who had the top scores on the knowledge assessment had acquired some college experience. During an interview, on the other hand, one parent said that he did not understand many of the words on the test. This individual had only completed the 10th grade.

3. Parents of children with disabilities typically considered to be moderate and/or severe, are more involved than the parents of children with disabilities generally considered as mild. It was

determined that there was a statistically significant relationship between children's levels of disabilities and parents' total involvement scores. The responses of the interviewees supported this conclusion. The parents of more severely disabled students stated that they were involved because of specific disability-related problems that were constant throughout all daily life activities and which caused the teachers to spend a lot of time with them. The parents of the children with mild disabilities stated that their involvement was basically with the school activities, and one parent reported she really forgot her child had a learning disability because it did not seem to affect him other than in school.

4. Parents of elementary school children with disabilities are more knowledgeable than parents of secondary school children with disabilities. The statistical analysis indicated the significance of grade level on the dependent variable of total knowledge. Data collected during the qualitative component did not confirm this finding. The interviewees consisted of five secondary parents and seven elementary parents. According to their input, the grade level did not seem to be a contributing factor to knowledge level.

5. The length of time a child has been served in special education has no bearing on either the involvement level or on knowledge level of the parent. The interviews supported this finding. One parent interviewed had a three-year-old severely disabled child. She had already become actively involved with Sooner Start, a statewide agency to serve families of children with disabilities from birth to three years of age. Another parent was selected because of his placement in the low-low quadrant, despite the fact that his child

was a secondary student and had been in special education for 11 years.

Recommendations

1. Because there is a significant relationship between involvement and knowledge, it is recommended that further research be conducted to determine whether one of the two variable influences the other. By determining if one variable actually does initiate and increase the other, the parents may have a more effective strategy for helping their children.
2. It is recommended that more options and activities which encourage parent involvement and education be developed. Parents with limited formal education are anticipated to need more guidance and explanation in understanding the policies and procedures in special education. Because of the parent who indicated that it seemed the teacher's main concern was to get the parent signature on a form, it is recommended that parents and school personnel alike strive to obtain a better understanding of the intent of the laws, policies, and procedures.
3. It is recommended that parents of children with mild disabilities receive opportunities for involvement and training as necessary to support their children's development. Because the study reported that parents of children who were more obviously disabled were more involved, it is recommended to conduct further research to identify the reasons the parents of children with mild

disabilities were less involved than parents of children with categories typically considered moderate and/or severe.

4. While it is recommended that teachers continue to emphasize involvement and education of the parents of the elementary school-age child with disabilities, it is of even greater importance for this to occur at the secondary level. Also, the high school teacher should seek to find a balance between promoting competence in the parent or family and promoting independence and self-advocacy as the individual with disabilities matures.

5. It is recommended that active participation of the parent in the decision-making process should be encouraged by school personnel. The school staff should be provided with training opportunities and sufficient time allotments to foster parent-professional partnerships. This concept will also be considered in greater detail in the commentary.

Commentary

The goal of a partnership and teamwork between parents and professionals are difficult ones. The easiest pattern is for the professional to adopt the traditional role of knowledgeable decision maker and the parents to adopt that of passive recipients. Changing these roles takes commitment by both parties (Healy, 1985, p. 51).

To foster independence and competency in families, and to make the most effective use of services, Healy noted that it is critical for both parents and professionals to distinguish between times when professional expertise is important to decision making and times when the parent is singularly competent to make decisions in the child's and family's best interest. Inappropriate dependence or

"learned helplessness" is encouraged when professionals make decisions which should be made by parents (Healy, 1985). The professionals needs to relay and explain all known available information regarding the educational opportunities and options to the parents of children with disabilities. This developmental process can be assisted by; appropriate translation of technical language along with limited jargon; providing relevant visual, auditory, or written materials; openly acknowledging unknowns while exploring positive and negative attributes of proposed actions or programs; and accessing and/or directing the parents to other agency or service resources.

The goal for parents should be to consider themselves critical examiners in a personalized decision-making process. Being "critical" implies analyzing both the positive and negative attributes of proposed options or situations. "Examiners" means that an individual must not only learn from professionals but also from theory and practices. Being able to examine various resources entails first knowing about services and resources available and accessible. "Personalized" is perhaps the key word in this goal. In order to personalize a plan, it is necessary that the parent actively participate in the search for possible avenues that meet the child's identified needs and strengths. "Decision-making process" must be understood by all to mean that decisions are made on the information known at the current time. The parent must weigh the pros and cons of the action(s) proposed and know that, with new information or ideas, decision(s) can be modified at any time.

The Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth has identified the family as the number one priority in a list of needs for improved services to for the children with disabilities. Family resource centers are being recommended as a vehicle for providing necessary and appropriate information and support to parents. With the center being coordinated by parents and supported by professionals, it should be able to serve individuals through a single-entry access, or one-stop service. Family resource centers are unique and innovative systems which may enable parents to connect with other parents, systems, agencies, and services. Future research will be necessary to track the type, number, and results of requests by individuals seeking information or support. The funding channeled to provide these family services should be reviewed to determine the utilization, benefit to individuals, and long-term effect on society.

In addition to the ability to thoroughly adapt and apply the laws of special education to particular situations, mediation skills, conflict resolution, identification and understanding of the stages of grief, listening skills, are areas to be developed in parents by the professional staff. Also, by addressing the parent education and involvement components in the federal law as a related service, it would be appropriate to study the achievements of parents, and the effects of this service on the students.

According to this study, it has been determined that parents prefer to get information and support from people in their home school. They will only approach advocacy groups when, or if, it appears they won't get support in their own schools. Generally, 85% of the parents surveyed would rather refer to their child's principal

or teacher for information as noted in item 25 of the Involvement Instrument and confirmed by the interviews. If school personnel provide this type of support and climate, then the dealings with outside groups may be minimized. It appears logical and realistic that those individuals closest to and involved with the child with disabilities would prefer to provide input in the decision-making process, rather than depend on a third party, such as a hearing officer or lawyer, to make the decisions. According to the results of the Involvement Instrument (Appendix C), items 23, 29, and 30 show that between 50 - 61% of the respondents indicated they were aware of legal assistance; yet according to the informal contact between the researcher and special education administrators in this same rural region, it was reported that very few parents actually expressed a formal complaint.

As a conclusion to this chapter and study, the researcher would like to make a point that this is also a summation of 24 years of experience in the field of special education. Partnership skills can be developed by both the parent and the professional staff to create an open climate in which bonding and a true connection can grow. Obviously, education and an understanding of the pragmatic issues of super- and sub-systems are necessary. The key issue is one of "shared ownership." Successful support groups epitomize this fact. To simplify this issue, all it entails is an effort by the professional to empathetically, but not emotionally, consider, "If this were my child," or "If I were in your shoes." This attitude has enabled many educators to bond with individuals with whom others have had difficulty. Individuals strive to create partnerships but, in order for

partnerships to grow and develop, there must be ownership. In order to obtain ownership, the event or relationship must be personalized as opposed to systematized. This simple concept is necessary for the parent and the professional. Professionals and parents must assume ownership and responsibility by dealing with and accepting the happenings in life, by getting personally involved, and by continued education. There is no secret way to train people how to develop partnerships. Everyone should know what it takes: time, energy, caring, and ownership. Other necessary factors are empathy and teamwork. The two traits which have been found to be antithetical to a positive relationship are emotional responses and territorialism. These two traits create barriers and communication breakdowns.

As indicated by the study, parents wish to form liaisons with their children's teachers. Expending funds, time, and energy to create innovative ways to develop personalized partnerships will produce effective results. This practice can be legitimized by legal mandates, theoretical rhetoric, results of this study, and personal experience. By utilizing and expanding the IEP as a basis for efforts to increase parents' knowledge and involvement, a personalized partnership can be developed. Parent involvement and education can be addressed as a related service and funds can legitimately be expended for such purposes. Because educators deal with such a wide variety of parents, it is necessary to personalize these objectives and goals.

The teacher must be sensitive to changing stages and dilemmas parents face. The teacher must also be sensitive to the parents' need

not to be involved at a particular point in time. By utilizing a team effort, including public and private sources, community, and pertinent agencies, most goals determined relevant by the team can be accomplished. It may be appropriate and necessary to create adaptable and innovative ways to reach goals, for example, if a parent works or desperately needs sign language instruction. As another example, if the uneducated, low-functioning parent refuses to develop a relationship or trust with school or agency personnel, could goals and objectives be developed utilizing the trusted neighbor to whom she does listen.

According to the survey and interviews, 85% of the parents indicated they questioned and talked to their child's teacher or school administrator. Because this parent-teacher relationship appeared to be a strong link; it is important for teachers to continue to develop their personal and professional capabilities to assist families in improving their decision-making skills. Through the process of learning to participate as a team member, the teacher can empower individuals to advocate for themselves. This research study indicates that parents generally report that teachers are explaining Parent Rights, IEP, etc; considering that two thirds of the parents surveyed scored above the seventh percentile. A foundation has been established, this study has identified specific areas parents need knowledge and ideas of opportunities for involvement. The task is to increase the number of parents scoring in the top percentiles. There is only one thing more effective than a parent advocating for his or her child, and that is a team advocating for the child.

It is important for parents to be involved in their children's educational programs. It is important for parents to not only understand their basic rights but to also know and be able to apply other legal and policy provisions regarding the education of students with disabilities. Only by working together, can parents and educators reach the real goal: the best possible program for our children.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

**PARENTS RIGHTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION
ENGLISH AND SPANISH VERSIONS**

**OKLAHOMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PARENTS RIGHTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION**

As the parent/guardian/surrogate parent of a child or youth who is receiving or may be eligible for special education services, you have certain rights according to State and Federal regulations. If you have questions about these rights and procedural safeguards, please contact your local school/public agency, the area Regional Education Service Center, or the Special Education Section (SES) of the Oklahoma State Department of Education. These rights and procedural safeguards are in accordance with Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations for implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

PRIOR NOTICE TO PARENTS

The public agency must provide prior written notice to the parents of a child with disabilities each time it proposes or refuses to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child or the provision of a free appropriate public education to the child.

The notice must include:

- A full explanation of all of the procedural safeguards available to the parents;
- A description of the action proposed or refused by the agency, an explanation of why the agency proposes or refuses to take the action, and a description of any options the agency considered and the reasons why those options were rejected;
- A description of each evaluation procedure, test, record, or report the agency uses as a basis for the proposal or refusal; and
- A description of any other factors which are relevant to the agency's proposal or refusal.

The notice must be written in language understandable to the general public, and provided in the native language of the parent or other mode of communication used by the parent, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so. If the native language or other mode of communication of the parent is not a written language, the State or local educational agency shall take steps to insure that the notice is translated orally or by other means to the parent in his or her native language or other mode of communication; that the parent understands the content of the notice, and that there is written evidence that these requirements have been met.

PARENT CONSENT

"Consent" means that: (a) the parent has been fully informed of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought, in his or her native language, or other mode of communication; (b) the parent understands and agrees in writing to the carrying out of the activity for which his or her consent is sought, and the consent describes that activity and lists the records (if any) which will be released and to whom; and (c) the parent understands that the granting of consent is voluntary on the part of the parent and may be revoked at any time.

The public agency must obtain parent consent before conducting a preplacement evaluation or initial placement of a child with disabilities in a program providing special education and related services. Except for preplacement evaluation and initial placement, the Federal regulations provide that consent may not be required as a condition of any benefit to the parent or child. Any changes in a child's special education program, after the initial placement, are not subject to parental consent under IDEA-Part B, but are subject to the prior notice and IEP requirements. Oklahoma procedures also require prior notice to parents and opportunity to participate in development or review of IEP's before conducting reevaluations.

The public agency may use the hearing procedures under 34 CFR 300.506-300.508 to determine: (a) if the child may be initially evaluated without parental consent where State or Federal law requires such consent (e.g., evaluations conducted by an employee or employees of a local education agency, local Guidance Clinics, or Regional Education Service Centers); and/or (b) if the child may initially be provided special education and related services without parental consent.

If the hearing officer upholds the agency, the agency may evaluate or initially provide special education and related services to the child without the parent's consent, subject to the parent's rights under provisions for administrative appeals, impartial reviews, civil actions, due process timelines, and status of the child during the proceedings under 34 CFR 300.510-300.513. The agency must notify the parent of its actions, and the parent has appeal rights as well as rights at the hearing itself.

EVALUATION

"Evaluation" means procedures used in accordance with 34 CFR 300.530-300.534 to determine whether a child is disabled and the nature and extent of the special education and related services that the child needs. The term means procedures used selectively with an individual child and does not include basic tests administered to or procedures used with all children in a school, grade, or class.

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)

An IEP must be written in a team meeting before a child is placed in a program for special education. Parents have the right for the local school/public agency to provide prior notice and give them the opportunity to participate in IEP development and all IEP reviews for the child. The public agency shall give the parent, on request, a copy of the IEP.

LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT (LRE)

Educational placement for each child or youth with a disability shall be:

- determined at least annually;
- based on his or her IEP;
- as close as possible to the child's home, unless the IEP requires some other arrangement;
- with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate;
- in the regular education environment unless the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular education classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved.

Each public agency shall ensure that a continuum of alternative placements is available to meet the needs of children and youth with disabilities for special education and related services.

In selecting the least restrictive environment, consideration should be given to any potential harmful effect on the child or on the quality of services which he or she needs. Children and youth with disabilities shall have the opportunity to participate in nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities with children and youth who do not have disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the child.

PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION

Personally identifiable information includes: the name of the child, the child's parent, or other family members; the address of the child; a personal identifier, such as the child's social security number or student number; or a list of personal characteristics or other information that would make it possible to identify the child with reasonable certainty.

ACCESS TO RECORDS

Each public agency shall permit parents to inspect and review any education records relating to their child with respect to the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child, and the provision of a free appropriate public education to the child, which are collected, maintained, or used by the agency under this part. The agency shall comply with a request without unnecessary delay and before any meeting regarding an individualized education program (IEP) or hearing relating to the identification, evaluation, or placement of the child, and in no case more than 45 days after the request has been made.

The right to inspect and review education records under this section includes:

- The right to a response from the participating agency to reasonable requests for explanations and interpretations of the records;
- The right to have a representative of the parent inspect and review the records; and
- The right to request that the agency provide copies of the records containing the information if failure to provide those copies would effectively prevent the parent from exercising the right to inspect and review the records.

An agency may presume that the parent has authority to inspect and review records relating to his or her child unless the agency has been advised that the parent does not have the authority under applicable State law governing such matters as guardianship, separation, and divorce.

If any education record includes information on more than one child, the parents of those children shall have the right to inspect and review only the information relating to their child or to be informed of that specific information.

Each agency shall provide parents on request a list of the types and locations of education records collected, maintained, or used by the agency.

FEEES FOR SEARCHING, RETRIEVING, AND COPYING RECORDS

A participating agency may not charge a fee to search for or to retrieve information under this part. An agency may charge a fee for copies of records which are made for parents under this part if the fee does not effectively prevent the parents from exercising their right to inspect and review those records.

RECORD OF ACCESS

Each public agency shall keep a record of parties obtaining access to education records collected, maintained, or used under this part (except access by parents and authorized employees of the participating agency), including the name of the party, the date access was given, and the purpose for which the party is authorized to use the records.

AMENDMENT OF RECORDS AT PARENT'S REQUEST

A parent who believes that information in education records collected, maintained, or used under this part is inaccurate or misleading or violates the privacy or other rights of the child, may request the participating agency which maintains the information to amend the information.

The agency shall decide whether to amend the information in accordance with the request within a reasonable period of time of receipt of this request. If the agency decides to refuse to amend the information in accordance with the request, it shall inform the parent of the refusal and advise the parent of the right to a hearing as set forth under 34 CFR 300.568, 300.570 and the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.

The agency shall, on request, provide an opportunity for a hearing to challenge information in education records to insure that it is not inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the privacy or other rights of the child. If, as a result of the hearing, the agency decides that the information is inaccurate, misleading or otherwise in violation of the privacy or other rights of the child, it shall amend the information accordingly and so inform the parent in writing.

If, as a result of the hearing, the agency decides that the information is not inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the privacy or other rights of the child, it shall inform the parent of the right to place in the records it maintains on the child a statement commenting on the information or stating any reasons for disagreeing with the decision of the agency. Any explanation placed in the records of the child under this section must be maintained by the agency as part of the records of the child as long as the record or contested portion is maintained by the agency; if the records of the child or the contested portion is disclosed by the agency to any party, the explanation must also be disclosed to the party.

INDEPENDENT EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION

"Independent educational evaluation" means an evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who is not employed by the public agency responsible for the education of the child in question.

"Independent educational evaluation at public expense" means that the public agency either pays for the full cost of the evaluation or insures that the evaluation is otherwise provided at no cost to the parent.

A parent has the right to an independent educational evaluation at public expense if the parent disagrees with an evaluation obtained by the public agency. However, the public agency may initiate a due process hearing to show that its evaluation is appropriate. If the final decision is that the evaluation is appropriate, the parent still has the right to an independent educational evaluation, but not at public expense. If the parent obtains an independent educational evaluation at private expense, the results of the evaluation must be considered by the public agency in any decision made with respect to the provision of a free appropriate public education to the child, and may be presented as evidence at a due process hearing regarding the child.

If a hearing officer requests an independent educational evaluation as part of a hearing, the cost of the evaluation must be at public expense. Each public agency shall provide to parents, on request, information about where an independent educational evaluation may be obtained.

Whenever an independent evaluation is at public expense, the criteria under which the evaluation is obtained, including the location of the evaluation and the qualifications of the examiner, must be the same as the criteria which the public agency uses when it initiates an evaluation.

The public agency may require prior notice by the parents prior to obtaining an independent educational evaluation at public expense. However, the public agency may not fail to pay for an independent educational evaluation if a parent does not notify the public agency that an independent educational evaluation is being sought.

SURROGATE PARENTS

Each public agency shall ensure that an individual is assigned to act as a surrogate for the parents of a child when no parent can be identified; the public agency, after reasonable efforts, cannot discover the whereabouts of a parent; or the child is a ward of the State under the laws of the State. The agency must have a method for determining whether a child needs a surrogate parent and a method for assigning a surrogate parent to the child.

The public agency may select a surrogate parent in any way permitted under State law, but must ensure that a person selected as a surrogate is not an employee of a public agency which is involved in the education or care of the child, has no interest that conflicts with the interest of the child he or she represents, and has knowledge and skills that ensure adequate representation of the child. (An individual is not disqualified as an agency employee from appointment as a surrogate solely because he or she is paid by the agency to serve as a surrogate parent.)

The surrogate parent may represent the child in all matters relating to the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child and the provision of a free appropriate public education to the child.

IMPARTIAL DUE PROCESS HEARING

A parent or a public educational agency may initiate a hearing regarding the public agency's proposal or refusal to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child or the provision of a free appropriate public education to the child.

The hearing will be conducted by the public agency directly responsible for the education of the child.

The public agency shall inform the parent of any free or low-cost legal and other relevant services available in the area if the parent requests the information or the parent or the agency initiates a due process hearing.

A hearing may not be conducted by a person who is an employee of a public agency which is involved in the education or care of the child, or by any person having a personal or professional interest which would conflict with his or her objectivity in the hearing. (A person who otherwise qualifies to conduct a hearing is not an employee of the agency solely because he or she is paid by the agency to serve as a hearing officer.)

Each public agency shall keep a list of the persons who serve as hearing officers. The list must include a statement of the qualification of each of those persons.

The State educational agency shall ensure that a final hearing decision is reached and mailed to the parties within 45 days after the receipt of a request for a hearing, unless the hearing officer grants a specific extension at the request of either party.

The decision made in a due process hearing is final, unless a party to the hearing appeals the decision under the procedures for impartial administrative appeal described below.

MEDIATION

The Oklahoma State Department of Education supports resolution of disputes through mediation or other informal means between parents and educators concerning the education of a child with a disability or purported to have disabilities.

The Federal Regulations, in regard to impartial due process hearings, include the following comments:

"Many States have pointed to the success of using mediation as an intervening step prior to conducting a formal due process hearing. Although the process of mediation is not required by the statute or these regulations, an agency may wish to suggest mediation in disputes concerning the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of children with disabilities, and the provision of a free appropriate public education to those children. Mediations have been conducted by members of State educational agencies or local educational agency personnel who were not previously involved in the particular case. In many cases, mediation leads to resolution of differences between parents and

agencies without the development of an adversarial relationship and with minimal emotional stress. However, mediation may not be used to deny or delay a parent's right under this subpart."

Mediation may be requested by either party but must be attended and agreed upon by both parties. The parties involved may or may not have representatives at the mediation; however, those persons attending should be in a position of authority to make decisions. Trained mediators are available, and may be requested from the Oklahoma State Department of Education, Special Education Section, or other resources which provide these services.

Either party may refuse to participate in a conference without prejudice to any procedural safeguard afforded under any applicable State or Federal law. Also, the mediation meeting does not alter the required time lines for due process hearings.

DUE PROCESS HEARING RIGHTS

Any party to a hearing has the right to:

- Be accompanied and advised by counsel and by individuals with special knowledge or training with respect to the problems of children with disabilities;
- Present evidence and confront, cross-examine, and compel the attendance of witnesses;
- Prohibit the introduction of any evidence at the hearing that has not been disclosed to that party at least five days before the hearing;
- Obtain a written or electronic verbatim record of the hearing;
- Obtain written findings of fact and decisions. (After deleting any personally identifiable information, the public agency shall transmit those findings and decisions to the State advisory panel and make them available to the public.)

Parents involved in hearings must be given the right to have the child who is the subject of the hearing present and to open the hearing to the public.

Each hearing must be conducted at a time and place which is reasonably convenient to the parents and child involved.

HOW TO REQUEST A DUE PROCESS HEARING

A request for a due process hearing must be in writing, signed, and addressed to the local school administrator, and include: child's name; date of birth; current grade or class placement; established or purported disability; and the reason for challenging the identification, evaluation, placement or appropriateness of the education for the child. A copy of this request must also be mailed to the Oklahoma State Department of Education, Special Education Section, 2500 North Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105-4599.

ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL: IMPARTIAL REVIEW

Any party aggrieved by the findings and decision in the hearing may appeal to the State educational agency. If there is an appeal, the State educational agency shall conduct an impartial review of the hearing. The official conducting the review shall;

- Examine the entire hearing record;
- Insure that the procedures at the hearing were consistent with the requirements of due process;
- Seek additional evidence if necessary. If a hearing is held to receive additional evidence, the hearing rights described above apply;
- Afford the parties an opportunity for oral or written argument, or both, at the discretion of the reviewing official;

- Make an independent decision on completion of the review; and
- Give a copy of written findings and the decision to the parties.

Each review involving oral arguments must be conducted at a time and place which is reasonably convenient to the parents and child involved.

The State educational agency shall ensure that a final decision is reached in an administrative review and mailed to the parties within 30 days after the receipt of a request for a review, unless the reviewing official grants a specific extension at the request of either party. The decision made by the reviewing official is final, unless a party brings a civil action under the procedures described below.

CIVIL ACTION

Any party aggrieved by the findings and decision made in an administrative review has the right to bring a civil action in State or Federal Court.

CHILD'S STATUS DURING PROCEEDINGS

During the pendency of any administrative or judicial proceeding regarding a complaint, unless the public agency and the parents of the child agree otherwise, the child involved in the complaint must remain in his or her present educational placement.

If the hearing involves an application for initial admission to public school, the child, with the consent of the parents, must be placed in the public school program until the completion of all the proceedings.

AWARD OF ATTORNEYS' FEES

In any action or proceeding brought under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the court may award reasonable attorneys' fees to the parents or guardians of a child or youth with disabilities who is the prevailing party.

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS AND SCHOOLS

**State Department of Education
Special Education Section
2500 North Lincoln Blvd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73105-4599
(405) 521-3351 TDD
SpecialNet OK.SE**

including:

**Early Intervention Regional Offices 1-800-42-OASIS
Regional Education Service Centers (405) 521-4155 SpecialNet OK.RESC
Tulsa State Office-Hissom Settlement (918) 518-2532 SpecialNet OK.SESTULSA**

OASIS

**Oklahoma Areawide Service Information System
1-800-42 OASIS or OKC Metro 271-6302**

**PRO-Oklahoma
Parents Reaching Out in Oklahoma
1-800-PL 94-102
(405) 681-9710 SpecialNet OK.PROJ**

**Office of Handicapped Concerns
1-800-522-8224
(405) 521-3756 TDD**

**Oklahoma Disability Law Center
1-800-226-5883 V/TDD
(918) 664-5883 V/TDD**

**Legal Aid of Western Oklahoma
(405) 521-1302
Legal Services of Eastern Oklahoma
(918) 584-3211
Oklahoma Indian Legal Services
1-800-759-0805 or (405) 528-5500**

**Department of Vocational Technical Education
(405) 377-2000
SpecialNet OK.VOTECH**

**Department of Health
(405) 271-5600
SpecialNet OK.DEPTHEALTH**

**Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services
(405) 271-8653
SpecialNet OK.DMH**

**Department of Human Services
(405) 521-2778
SpecialNet OK.DHSSTATEOFF**

**Department of Rehabilitation Services
(405) 424-4311**

DEPARTAMENTO DE EDUCACION DEL ESTADO DE OKLAHOMA DERECHOS DE LOS PADRES DE NIÑOS EN EDUCACION ESPECIAL

Como padres/tutores/padre sustituto de un niño o joven que califique o quizás está recibiendo servicios de educación especial, usted tiene ciertos derechos de acuerdo con las reglas estatales o federales. Si usted tiene preguntas sobre estos derechos y salvaguardia de los procedimientos, favor de comunicarse con su agencia pública/escuela local, el Centro de Servicios Educativos del área, o la Sección de Educación Especial (SES) del Departamento de Educación del Estado de Oklahoma. Estos derechos y salvaguardias de procedimientos están de acuerdo con el Título 34 del Cuerpo de Leyes Federales para la implementación de el Acta de Educación de Individuales con Incapacidades (IDEA).

NOTIFICACION PREVIA A LOS PADRES

La agencia pública debe proveer notificación previa en forma escrita a los padres de niños con incapacidades cada vez que dicha agencia propone o rechaza a iniciar o cambiar la identificación, evaluación, colocación educativa del niño o la provisión de una educación apropiada y gratuita para el niño.

Esta notificación debe incluir:

- Una explicación completa de todos los salvaguardias de procedimientos disponibles a los padres;
- Una descripción de la acción propuesta o rechazada por la agencia, una explicación de la razón por la cual la agencia propone o rechaza tomar la acción y una descripción de cualquier opción que la agencia haya considerado y las razones por las que éstas opciones fueron rechazadas;
- Una descripción de cada procedimiento de la evaluación, prueba, documentación, o reporte que la agencia use como base para la propuesta o rechazo; y
- Una descripción de cualquier otros factores que sean significantes de la propuesta o el rechazo de la agencia.

La notificación debe ser escrita en un lenguaje que se comprenda por el público en general, y sea proporcionada en el propio lenguaje u otro modo de comunicación usado por el padre, a menos no sea posible hacerlo claramente. Si el lenguaje u otro modo de comunicación del padre no es un lenguaje escrito, la agencia Estatal o local educativa tomará medidas para asegurarse que la notificación sea traducida oralmente o por otros medios para los padres en su lenguaje u otro modo de comunicación; para que los padres comprendan el contenido de la notificación, y que haya evidencia escrita que conste que estos requisitos se han llevado a cabo.

CONSENTIMIENTO DE LOS PADRES

"Consentimiento" significa que: (a) se ha dado al padre información completa respecto a la actividad de la cual se pide consentimiento, en su propio lenguaje u otra manera de comunicación; (b) el padre comprende y acuerda por escrito, que se lleve a cabo esta actividad de la cual se pide su consentimiento, y que el consentimiento describa esa actividad y documenta si existen algunos los cuales serán otorgados y a quién; y (c) los padres comprenden que el dar su consentimiento es voluntario por parte del padre y puede ser revocado a cualquier tiempo.

La agencia pública debe obtener el consentimiento de los padres antes de administrar una evaluación, antes de la colocación, o colocación inicial de un niño con incapacidades en un programa que provee educación especial y servicios relacionados. Con excepción de la evaluación antes de la colocación o de la colocación inicial, los reglamentos federales proveen que el consentimiento tal vez no se requiera como una condición de algún beneficio para los padres o los niños. Cualquier cambio en el programa de educación especial del niño, después de la colocación inicial, no son sujetos al consentimiento de los padres bajo la parte B de el Acta IDEA (Individual with Disabilities Education Act), pero son sujetos a notificación anterior y a los requisitos del plan individual educativo (IEP). Los procedimientos del Estado de Oklahoma también requieren notificación con anterioridad a padres y la oportunidad de participar en el desarrollo o repaso del IEP antes de conducir reevaluaciones.

La agencia pública puede usar los procedimientos de una audiencia bajo reglamento 34 CFR 300.506-300.508 para determinar: (a) si el niño

puede ser inicialmente examinado sin el consentimiento de los padres cuando la ley estatal o federal requiere tal permiso (e.g., evaluaciones administradas por un empleado o empleados de la agencia educativa local o de un Centro de Guía Local o Centros de Servicios Educativos Regionales); y/o (b) si al niño se le puede iniciar educación especial y servicios relacionados sin el consentimiento de los padres.

Si el oficial de la audiencia respalda a la agencia, la agencia puede evaluar o iniciar, educación especial y servicios relacionados para el niño sin el consentimiento de los padres, sujeta a los derechos de los padres bajo las provisiones de apelaciones administrativas, repasos imparciales, acciones civiles, procesos legales correspondientes de tiempos fijos, y el estado del niño durante los procedimientos del reglamento 34 CFR 30.510-300.513. La agencia debe notificar a los padres de sus acciones, y los padres tendrán los mismos derechos de apelación por igual a los derechos de la audiencia.

EVALUACION

"Evaluación" significa los procedimientos usados de acuerdo con el reglamento 34 CFR 300.530-300.534 para determinar si un niño está incapacitado y la naturaleza y el grado de educación especial y servicios relacionados que necesite el niño. La palabra significa los procedimientos usados exclusivamente con un niño en particular y no incluye pruebas básicas administradas o procedimientos usados con todos los niños en una escuela, grado o clase.

PLAN INDIVIDUAL DE EDUCACION (IEP)

Un IEP debe ser escrito en una conferencia del grupo de educación antes que el niño sea colocado en un programa de educación especial. Los padres tienen el derecho que la escuela local/agencia pública les notifique con anterioridad y les dé la oportunidad de participar en el desarrollo del IEP y en todos los repasos del IEP para el niño. La agencia pública les dará una copia del IEP a los padres cuando ellos lo deseen.

AMBIENTE MENOS RESTRINGIDO (LRE)

La colocación educacional de cada niño o joven con una incapacidad será:

- determinada por lo menos cada año;
- basada en su IEP;
- lo más cerca posible al hogar del niño al menos que el IEP requiera otros arreglos;
- con niños no incapacitados hasta el máximo grado apropiado;
- en un ambiente de educación regular al menos que la naturaleza o severidad de la incapacidad sea tal que la educación en clases regulares con el uso de ayuda y servicios suplementales no se puedan adquirir.

Cada agencia pública asegurará que una continuación de colocaciones alternativas estén disponibles para reunir las necesidades de los niños y jóvenes con incapacidades para educación especial y servicios relacionados.

En la selección del ambiente menos restringido, se debe dar consideración a efectos posiblemente dañinos al niño o la calidad de servicios que el o ella necesiten. Niños y jóvenes con incapacidades tendrán la oportunidad de participar en actividades no académicas o servicios extracurriculares con niños y jóvenes que no tienen incapacidades hasta el máximo grado apropiado para las necesidades de ese niño.

INFORMACION PERSONAL IDENTIFICABLE

Información personal identificable incluye: el nombre del niño, el padre del niño u otros miembros de la familia; la dirección del niño; algo que lo identifique personalmente, tal como un número de seguro social del niño o número de alumno; o una lista de características personales u otra información que haría posible la identificación del niño con certeza razonable.

ACCESO A LA DOCUMENTACION

Cada agencia pública permitirá a los padres que inspeccionen o revisen cualquier documentación educativa relacionada a su niño correspondiente a la identificación, evaluación, y colocación educativa del

niño, y de la provisión de una educación pública y gratuita para el niño, que se han acumulado, mantenido, o usado por la agencia bajo esta parte. La agencia cumplirá con una solicitud sin demorar innecesariamente antes de cualquier reunión respecto al plan educativo individual (IEP) o una audiencia respecto a la identificación, evaluación, o colocación del niño, y en ningún caso por más de 45 días después de que la solicitud se haya hecho.

El derecho de inspeccionar y revisar la documentación educativa bajo esta sección incluye:

- El derecho a una respuesta de la agencia participante a solicitudes razonables de explicaciones e interpretaciones de la documentación;
- El derecho de tener un representante por parte del padre, que inspeccione y repase la documentación; y
- El derecho de solicitar a una agencia pública que provea copias de la documentación con la información adecuada, sin estas copias, se impedirá el derecho para que los padres inspeccionen y repasen la documentación.

Una agencia puede suponer que el padre tiene la autoridad de inspeccionar y repasar documentación pertinente a su hijo al menos que a la agencia se le haya aconsejado que el padre no tiene la autoridad bajo la ley estatal que gobierna tales casos de tutela, separación, y divorcio.

Si alguna documentación educativa incluye información de más de un niño, los padres de esos niños tendrán el derecho de inspeccionar o revisar solamente la información relacionada a su niño o de ser notificados de la información específica.

Cada agencia proporcionará a los padres que han hecho una solicitud, una lista de todo tipo y localidades de documentación educativa acumulada, mantenida, o usada por la agencia.

LOS COSTOS DE BUSCAR, Y RECUPERAR COPIAS ADICIONALES DE LA DOCUMENTACION

La agencia participante no cobra, para buscar o recuperar información bajo esta parte. Posiblemente algunas agencias cobren por copias o documentación hechas para los padres bajo esta parte si el cobro no previene a los padres de ejercer sus derechos de inspeccionar y repasar esos documentos.

DOCUMENTACION ACCESIBLE

Cada agencia pública tendrá documentada a toda persona que obtiene acceso a la documentación educativa acumulada, mantenida, o usada bajo esta parte (con la excepción de acceso por los padres y empleados autorizados de la agencia participante), incluyendo el nombre de la persona, la fecha en que se dió acceso, y el propósito por el cual la persona fué autorizada para usar los documentos.

ENMIENDA DE DOCUMENTOS SOLICITADOS POR LOS PADRES

Un padre que piensa que la información acumulada, mantenida o usada bajo esta parte en los documentos educativos, está equivocada o dudosa o que la privacidad del niño ha sido invadida, puede pedir que la agencia participante que mantiene la información rectifique esa información.

La agencia decidirá si rectifica la información de acuerdo con la solicitud dentro de un tiempo razonable a partir del momento que se recibió esta solicitud. Si la agencia decide rechazar la enmienda de información de acuerdo con la solicitud, informará a los padres del rechazo, y acomodará al padre de su derecho de fijar una audiencia dictada bajo la ley 34 CFR 300.568, 300.570 y el Acta de Derechos de Privacidad y Educación Familiar.

Al tiempo que se pide, la agencia deberá proporcionar una oportunidad para una audiencia para disputar la información en los documentos educativos y para asegurar que no está equivocada o dudosa y que la privacidad u otros derechos del niño no han invadido de alguna manera. Si como resultado de la audiencia la agencia decide que la información está equivocada o es dudosa y de una u otra manera invade la privacidad del niño, se tendrá que rectificar la información y se hará una notificación a los padres por escrito.

Si como resultado de la audiencia, la agencia decide que la información no está equivocada, no está en duda, o que no está invadiendo la privacidad del niño de alguna manera, se informará al padre del derecho de colocar un testimonio en los documentos que mantienen del niño comentando sobre la información o declarar cualquier razón de desacuerdos con la decisión de la agencia. Cualquier explicación colocada en los

documentos del niño bajo esta sección permanecerán en la agencia como información del niño hasta que la documentación o la parte del desacuerdo sea mantenida por la agencia; si la documentación del niño o la parte del desacuerdo es mostrada por la agencia a otra persona, la explicación también se debe mostrar a esta persona.

EVALUACION EDUCACIONAL PARTICULAR

"Evaluación educacional particular" significa una evaluación administrada por un examinador cualificado que no sea empleado por la agencia pública responsable por la educación del niño.

"Evaluación educacional particular al costo público" significa que la agencia pública ya sea que pague por el costo completo de la evaluación o asegure que la evaluación se provea sin costo alguno a los padres.

Los padres tienen el derecho a una evaluación educacional particular a costo público si los padres no están de acuerdo con la evaluación obtenida por la agencia pública. Sin embargo la agencia pública puede iniciar un proceso de audiencia para demostrar que esa evaluación es apropiada. Si la decisión final decide que la evaluación es apropiada, los padres aún tienen el derecho de pedir una evaluación particular educacional, pero no al costo público. Si los padres obtienen una evaluación educacional particular a costo privado, los resultados de la evaluación deben ser considerados por la agencia pública en cualquier decisión hecha con respecto a la provisión de una educación pública y gratuita del niño, y se puede presentar como evidencia en un proceso de audiencia respecto al niño.

Si el oficial de la audiencia pide una evaluación educacional particular como parte de dicha audiencia, el costo de la evaluación será pagado por el público. Cada agencia pública indicará a los padres dónde pueden adquirir una evaluación educativa particular, cuando ellos lo requieran.

Cuando una evaluación educacional particular se hace al costo público, el criterio bajo la cual la evaluación es obtenida, incluyendo la localidad de la evaluación y las credenciales del examinador, debe ser igual al criterio que se usa en la agencia pública cuando inicia una evaluación.

Posiblemente, la agencia pública requiera de previo aviso por parte de los padres antes de obtener una evaluación particular al costo público. Sin embargo, la agencia pública no puede dejar de pagar una evaluación educativa particular si un padre no notifica a la agencia pública que se está buscando una evaluación particular.

PADRES SUBSTITUTOS

Cada agencia pública deberá asegurar que un individuo será nombrado como padre sustituto de un niño cuando los padres de tal niño no puedan ser localizados; la agencia pública, después de hacer esfuerzos razonables, no puede dar con el paradero de los padres; o el niño está bajo protección del estado según las leyes estatales. La agencia debe tener un método para determinar si un niño necesita un padre sustituto, y de igual manera un método para nombrar a un padre sustituto para ese niño.

La agencia pública puede seleccionar un padre sustituto según permita la ley Estatal, pero debe asegurarse que la persona seleccionada como padre sustituto no sea empleado de la agencia pública en la cual la educación o el cuidado del niño esté involucrada, que no tenga ningún interés opuesto con los intereses del niño que representan, y que tenga conocimiento y destrezas que aseguren representación adecuada del niño. (Un individuo no puede ser descalificado de su nombramiento como padre sustituto por ser empleado de la agencia solamente porque la agencia le paga por servir como padre sustituto.)

El padre sustituto puede representar al niño en todas las instancias relacionadas a la identificación, evaluación, colocación educativa, y la provisión de una educación pública y gratuita para el niño.

PROCESO DE AUDIENCIA IMPARCIAL

Un padre o una agencia educativa puede iniciar un audiencia con respecto a la propuesta o rechazo de la agencia pública para iniciar o cambiar la identificación, evaluación o colocación educativa del niño o de la provisión de una educación pública y apropiada para el niño.

La audiencia será conducida por la agencia pública directamente responsable por la educación del niño.

La agencia pública informará a los padres de cualquier servicio legal gratis o de bajo costo y de otros servicios significantes disponibles en el área, si los padres piden esa información, o si los padres o la agencia

inician un proceso de audiencia.

La audiencia no puede ser conducida por una persona que sea empleado de la agencia pública en relación con la educación o en el bienestar del niño, o por alguna persona que tenga interés personal o profesional que estaría en conflicto con su objetividad en la audiencia. (Una persona que califica para conducir la audiencia no es empleado de la agencia solamente porque recibe pago de dicha agencia para servir como oficial de la misma.)

Cada agencia pública mantendrá una lista de personas que sirven como oficiales de audiencias. La lista debe incluir el testimonio de las credenciales de esas personas.

La agencia educacional del Estado debe asegurar que la decisión final de la audiencia sea enviada por correo a las personas, a partir de los 45 días después de recibir la petición para una audiencia, al menos que el oficial de la audiencia conceda una extensión específica por la solicitud de cualquiera de las personas.

La decisión hecha en un proceso de audiencia es final, al menos que una persona de la audiencia apELE la decisión bajo los procedimientos de apelación administrativa imparcial descrita posteriormente.

MEDIACION

El Departamento de Educación del Estado de Oklahoma apoya a la resolución de desacuerdos por manera de mediación u otros recursos entre los padres y el personal educativo con respecto a la educación de un niño con una incapacidad actual o supuesta.

Las Regulaciones Federales, con respecto a los procedimientos de audiencia imparciales, incluye los siguientes comentarios:

"Muchos Estados han señalado el éxito de mediación como un paso interpuesto antes de conducir un proceso de audiencia formal. Aunque el proceso de intervención no es requerido por las leyes o estas reglas, la agencia quizás sugiera mediación en desacuerdos con respecto a la identificación, evaluación y colocación educativa de niños con incapacidades, y la provisión de una educación pública apropiada y gratuita para esos niños. Las mediaciones se han conducido por miembros de agencias educativas del Estado o personal educativo de la agencia local, que no han estado relacionados anteriormente en ese caso en particular. "En muchos casos la mediación resulta en la solución de las diferencias entre los padres y las agencias sin el desarrollo de una relación adversa y con tensión mínima. Sin embargo, la mediación no se puede usar para negar o retrasar los derechos de los padres bajo esta sección".

Mediación se puede pedir y ser atendido por cualquiera de los dos partidos pero deberá ser de común acuerdo. Los partidos relacionados pueden o no tener representantes en la mediación; sin embargo esas personas que atienden deben ser de una posición de autoridad para hacer decisiones. Personas capacitadas en el proceso de mediación están disponibles, y se puede requerir de sus servicios al Departamento de Educación del Estado de Oklahoma, Sección de Educación Especial o de otros recursos que provean estos servicios.

Cualquiera de los dos partidos puede rehusar a participar en una conferencia sin perjudicar cualquier salvaguardia de los procedimientos que están bajo alguna ley, ya sea federal o estatal, que se pueda aplicar. Así mismo la junta de mediación no cambia en nada los requisitos de la limitación del tiempo para las audiencias.

DERECHOS DEL PROCEDIMIENTO DE LA AUDIENCIA

- Cualquier partido de una audiencia tiene el derecho de:
- Ser acompañado y aconsejado por un asesor o por personas con conocimiento especial o entrenamiento con respecto a los problemas de niños con incapacidades;
 - Presentar evidencias y enfrentar, interrogar, y exigir la presencia de testigos;
 - Prohibir la presentación de cualquier evidencia en la audiencia que no se ha revelado a ese partido por lo menos cinco días antes de la audiencia;
 - Obtener documentación de la audiencia en forma escrita o grabada palabra por palabra electrónicamente;
 - Obtener resultados de los hechos y decisiones por escrito. (Después de restar alguna información que pueda identificar a la persona, la agencia pública transmitirá sus decisiones al grupo consejero del Estado y los pondrá a disposición del público.)

A los padres que participan en la audiencia, se les debe dar el

derecho a que el niño por el cual se está llevando la audiencia a cabo esté presente, y la audiencia deberá ser pública.

Cada audiencia debe de conducirse a un tiempo y lugar conveniente para los padres y el niño.

CÓMO SOLICITAR UNA AUDIENCIA

Para solicitar una audiencia tendrá que ser en forma escrita, firmada y enviada al administrador de la escuela correspondiente, y deberá incluirse: el nombre del niño; fecha de nacimiento; grado actual; incapacidad actual o supuesta; y la razón por la discusión sobre la identificación, evaluación, colocación o de la educación apropiada para el niño. Una copia de esta solicitud se debe enviar por correo al Departamento de Educación de Oklahoma, Sección de Educación Especial, 2500 North Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105-4599.

APELACION ADMINISTRATIVA: REPASO IMPARCIAL

Algún partido agraviado por la decisión y los resultados de la audiencia puede apelar en la agencia educativa del Estado. Si hay una apelación, la agencia educativa estatal conducirá un repaso imparcial de la audiencia. El oficial encargado de dirigir el repaso deberá:

- Examinar la documentación entera de la audiencia;
- Asegurar que los procedimientos estén consistentes con los requisitos de la audiencia;
- Buscar evidencias adicionales si es necesario. Si se conduce una audiencia para recibir evidencia adicional, los derechos de audiencia anteriormente aplican;
- Dar la oportunidad a los partidos de discutir oralmente ya sea por escrito, o por los dos medios, a discreción del oficial que hace el repaso;
- Hacer una decisión independiente al completar el repaso; y
- Dar una copia de los resultados y la decisión a los partidos por escrito.

Cada repaso sobre discusiones orales deben ser dirigidos a un tiempo y en un lugar que sea conveniente para los padres y el niño.

La agencia educativa del Estado asegurará que se lleve a una decisión final en un repaso administrativo y que se envíe por correo a los partidos dentro de 30 días después de que se reciba una solicitud para un repaso, a menos que el oficial a cargo del repaso, dé una extensión a la solicitud de cualquier partido. La decisión tomada por el oficial del repaso es definitiva, al menos que uno de los partidos demande una acción civil bajo los procedimientos descritos posteriormente.

ACCION CIVIL

Cualquier partido agraviado por la decisión de los resultados hecho durante el repaso administrativo tiene el derecho de demandar una acción civil en la Corte Estatal o Federal.

ESTADO LEGAL DEL NIÑO DURANTE LOS PROCEDIMIENTOS

Durante la suspensión de cualquier procedimiento administrativo o judicial respecto a la demanda, al menos que la agencia pública y los padres del niño decidan lo contrario, el niño relacionado en la demanda debe permanecer en su colocación educativa actual.

Si la audiencia es acerca de una aplicación para iniciar su admisión a una escuela pública, el niño, con el permiso de los padres debe ser acomodado en el programa de la escuela pública hasta que se finalicen todos los procedimientos.

COMPENSACION DEL PAGO DE ABOGADOS

En cualquier acción o procedimiento bajo la Parte B del Acta de Educación de Personas con Desventajas, la corte puede dictar que los costos del abogado sean razonables ya que serán pagados por los padres o tutores del niño o joven con desventajas que es del partido prevalectante.

MEDIOS INFORMATIVOS PARA PADRES Y ESCUELAS

Departamento de Educación Estatal

Sección Estatal Educacional

2500 North Lincoln Blvd.

Oklahoma City, OK 73105-4599

(405) 521-3351 TDD

Incluyendo:

Oficinas Regionales de Intervención Prematura 1-800-42 OASIS

Centros Regionales de Servicios Educativos (405) 521-4155 SpecialNet OK.RESC

Oficina Estatal de Tulsa-Hissom Settlement (918) 581-2532 SpecialNet OK.SESTULSA

OASIS

Oklahoma Areawide Service Information System

1-800-42-OASIS

or OKC Metro 271-6302

PRO-Oklahoma

Parents Reaching Out in Oklahoma

1-800 PL 94-142

(405) 681-9710 SpecialNet OK.PROJ

Office of Handicapped Concerns

1-800-PL 94 -142

(405) 521-3756 TDD

Oklahoma Disability Law Center

1-800-226-5883 V/TDD

(818) 664-5883 V/TDD

Legal Aid of Western Oklahoma

(405) 521-1302

Legal Services of Eastern Oklahoma

(918) 584-3211

Oklahoma Indian Legal Services

1-800-759-085 o (405) 528-5500

Department of Vocational Technical Education

(405) 377-2000

SpecialNet OK.VOTECH

Department of Health

(405) 271-5600

SpecialNet OK.DEPHEALTH

Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services

(405) 271-8653

SpecialNet OK.DMH

Department of Human Services

(405) 521-2778

SpecialNet OK.DHSSTATEOFF

Department of Rehabilitation Services

(405) 424-4311

APPENDIX B

**SPECIAL EDUCATION KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT
SPECIAL EDUCATION KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT ANSWER KEY**

Special Education Knowledge Assessment

Directions: Circle True or False. Please use no references other than your memory and judgement. Thank you for your time in answering these questions.

- | | | | |
|---|---|-----|---|
| T | F | 1. | Parent consent must be given before preplacement evaluation and before initial placement is made in special education. |
| T | F | 2. | IEP means Increasing Educational Potential. |
| T | F | 3. | Parents can inspect and review the child's records and request copies. |
| T | F | 4. | Prior notice to the parent is not necessary for the initial placement into a special education program. |
| T | F | 5. | A student will be reevaluated every three years in the child's native language or other mode of communication. |
| T | F | 6. | An independent evaluation cannot be obtained at public expense. |
| T | F | 7. | An IQ score is sufficient information in order to determine eligibility in special education. |
| T | F | 8. | Least restrictive environment means that the child will be educated in the regular educational environment. |
| T | F | 9. | The parent will be informed before information in the child's file is to be destroyed. |
| T | F | 10. | Parents have the right to an impartial due process with a state appointed hearing officer. |
| T | F | 11. | The IEP can only be reviewed on the date assigned on the last page. |
| T | F | 12. | Related services are defined as supportive services as required for the disabled child to benefit from their specially designed education. Examples would be speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, etc. |

- T F 13. An IEP can be written for 14-18 months before it is reviewed.
- T F 14. The team could write one IEP for the educational program, another for the speech therapy program, and a separate IEP for physical therapy.
- T F 15. Transition services do not have to be addressed on the IEP until the senior year in public school.
- T F 16. The training of surrogate parents as IEP team members, is to be provided by the school district or responsible educational agency.
- T F 17. Instruction in residential settings is not considered a service delivery option for teams to consider as they determine the least restrictive environment.
- T F 18. In recording grades on a permanent record, such as a transcript or report card, there must not be any discrimination or reference to the student's placement in special education.
- T F 19. When determining the length of school day for the student, the team can take the school bus schedule or parents working schedule into consideration.
- T F 20. If a school has a disclosure or transfer policy in their Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act policy, a school may disclose or transfer personally identifiable and confidential records to the school in which the student seeks to enroll without written parent permission.
- T F 21. A school provides personalized instruction with sufficient support services to permit the child with disabilities to benefit educationally from the instruction; therefore, the IEP should be reasonably calculated to enable the child to achieve passing marks and to advance from grade to grade.
- T F 22. Catheterization at school would not be considered a "related service" under IDEA because it doesn't serve a need arising from the effort to educate.

- T F 23. Suspension of a student with disabilities cannot exceed ten days at a time, but may extend beyond that number (in accumulation) during the school year.
- T F 24. A child not eligible for special education according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act can still receive physical therapy from school if the parent requests it.
- T F 25. If a student is eligible for the category of Learning Disabilities, it means he/she will go into the LD lab for at least 30 minutes per day.
- T F 26. Adaptive behavior information from both home and school must be assessed as part of the comprehensive view of the child by the multidisciplinary team.
- T F 27. Local school officials are prohibited from expelling students whose disabilities are the cause for their disruptive behavior. The school's course of action is to review the IEP.
- T F 28. All disabled children are entitled to a summer program to prevent regression of progress made during the regular school year.
- T F 29. A person may be eligible for services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 but not eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- T F 30. Parents of children with disabilities who unilaterally change the placement of their child during review proceedings can get tuition reimbursement from their school district for private school tuition even when the public school has an appropriate IEP.

SPECIAL EDUCATION KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT
ANSWER KEY (Winkle, 1994)

1. TRUE - Parent consent must be obtained before conducting a preplacement evaluation and initial placement of a child with a disability in a program providing special education and related services (P&P Manual, p. 30). (96% responded correctly).
2. FALSE - IEP means Individualized Education Program (P&P Manual, p. 65). (51% responded correctly).
3. TRUE - Parents and eligible students have the right to make reasonable request for and receive an explanation and interpretation of the content of records maintained by ht LEA. They also have the right to request and receive a copy of the individual student's records if failure to receive the copies would effectively prevent the parent or eligible student from reviewing and inspecting the records (P&P Manual, p. 19). (97% responded correctly).
4. FALSE - Parents must be given written notice a reasonable rime before the public agency proposes or refuses to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child or the provision of a free, appropriate public education to the child (P&P Manual, p. 30). (90% responded correctly).
5. TRUE - Each child who is receiving special education and related services must receive a comprehensive, multidisciplinary evaluation at least every three years, or more frequently if conditions, warrant, or if the child's parent or teacher requests an evaluation (P&P Manual, p. 42). (72% responded correctly).
6. FALSE - Each public agency shall provide to parents, on request, information about where an independent educational evaluation may be obtained. A parent has the right to an independent educational evaluation at public expense if the parent disagrees with an evaluation obtained by the public agency (P&P Manual, p. 62). (47% responded correctly).
7. FALSE - No single procedure is used as the sole criterion for determining an appropriate educational program for a child (P&P Manual, p. 39). (73% responded correctly).

8. FALSE - The purpose of the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) requirement is to ensure that, to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities receive instruction with children who do not have disabilities. The IEP team must clearly document that a variety of options are considered to determine placement. The selected placement should be appropriate in terms of the child's needs rather than what can be conveniently provided by the LEA (P&P Manual, p. 89). (57% responded correctly).
9. TRUE - The public agency shall inform parents when personally identifiable information collected, maintained, or used under this part is no longer needed to provide educational services to the child (P&P Manual, p. 23). (77% responded correctly).
10. TRUE - A hearing shall be conducted by an impartial hearing officer. The "impartial hearing officer" shall mean the appointment of a trained individual by the SDE, Special Education Section, for the purpose of presiding at the due process hearing (P&P Manual, p. 112). (84% responded correctly).
11. FALSE - It is the responsibility of the LEA to initiate and conduct meetings to develop, review, and revise the IEP for children with disabilities that are residents of the LEA. A meeting must be held for this purpose at least once a year. If the child's parents or teacher feels that the placement or IEP services are not appropriate for the child, it would be appropriate to hold another meeting at anytime during the year (P&P Manual, p. 85-87). (77% responded correctly).
12. TRUE - Under federal regulations, related services are defined as those developmental, corrective, and supportive services which are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education (P&P Manual, p. 85-87). (88% responded correctly).
13. FALSE - see item 11. (75% responded correctly).
14. FALSE - Annual goals and short term objectives shall be written in the IEP for all related services. The IEP shall clearly specify the amount of time each related service is being provided and

shall not be described merely in terms of a range or maximum amount of time within a school week (P&P Manual, p. 87). (33% responded correctly).

15. FALSE - Transition services must be addressed by the IEP team at age 16 or younger, if appropriate (P&P Manual, p. 77). (73% responded correctly).
16. TRUE - Training of surrogate parents is to be provided by the LEA. Surrogate parents have the responsibility and rights to represent the child with disabilities in all matters related to: identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child; and provision of a free appropriate public education for the child (P&P Manual, p. 35). (64% responded correctly).
17. FALSE - The continuum required must include the alternative placements listed in the definition of special education: instruction in regular classes, special classes, special schools, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions, and make provision for supplementary services (such as resource room or itinerant instruction) to be provided in conjunction with regular class placement (P&P Manual, p. 89). (61% responded correctly).
18. TRUE - In recording grades on a permanent record there must not be any reference to the child's placement in special education. A student's transcript must not contain any information which is considered to be discriminatory based on a disability. This would include any reference to special education placements or categories, special services, test information or reference to a disability (P&P Manual, p. 79). (81% responded correctly).
19. FALSE - Children with disabilities are entitled to the same length of school day offered all children as established by the Accreditation Standards approved by the State Board of Education. However, determination of length of school day for children eligible for special education may be made on an individual basis by the IEP team in order to meet the needs of the child (P&P Manual, p. 8). (47% responded correctly).
20. TRUE - The LEA may disclose personally identifiable information from a student's education record to other school officials,

including teachers, with the LEA; to officials of another school system or post secondary education institution where the student seeks or intends to enroll, in accordance with FERPA regulations (P&P Manual, p. 22). (31% responded correctly).

21. TRUE - Federal regulations do not hold LEAs accountable for a child reaching a certain level of achievement. However, the LEA is responsible to ensure that the IEP is appropriate and implemented as written. The IEP should be reasonable calculated for the child to benefit from the program and if educated in the regular classroom to enable the child to receive passing marks and to advance from grade to grade (P&P Manual, p. 78; Board of Education v. Rowley, 1982). (79% responded correctly).
22. FALSE - The Supreme Court upheld a Court of Appeals decision that clean intermittent catheterization (may) be a "supportive service required to assist a handicapped child to benefit from special education". Without availability of the service during the school day, a special education child could not attend school and access eligible services (Special Education Law, p. 142; Irving Independent School District v. Tatro, 1984). (40% responded correctly).
23. TRUE - OCR has determined that a series of separate suspensions during the school year that total 10 school days or fewer is not considered to be a "significant change in placement." A series of separate suspensions during the school year that, in total, exceed 10 school days is *likely* to be considered a "significant change in placement". Factors to be considered are the length of each suspension, the proximity of the suspensions to one another, and the total amount of time the child is excluded from school. OSEP has concluded that the "ten-day suspension clock would start again once the placement of a student with disabilities who previously had been suspended for misbehavior has been changed through the appropriate procedures for reviewing the student's IEP" (P&P Manual, p. 83. and Goss v. Lopez, 1975). (60% responded correctly).
24. FALSE - see item 12 for the definition of related services. Prior to the initial placement of a child with a disability, a comprehensive, multidisciplinary evaluation shall be accomplished in all areas related to the suspected disability of

the child. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine the presence of a disability(ies), any adverse effects on academic performance, the child's educational needs, and whether the child requires special education and related services (P&P Manual, p. 38). (83% responded correctly).

25. FALSE - see items 8 and 17 for references to LRE. The IEP must identify specific special education and related services that will be provided as part of the student's educational program. The types of services, amount and frequency of services shall be included in the IEP (P&P Manual, p. 47). (31% responded correctly).
26. TRUE - The multidisciplinary evaluation shall include information from the home and school in order to provide a comprehensive perspective of the child (P&P Manual, p. 47). (83% responded correctly).
27. TRUE - Suspension of a student with a disability for more than 10 consecutive school days constitutes a change of placement. Before such a change in placement may be implemented, the school must first conduct a review to evaluate the child's placement. As a part of this process, the IEP team must convene and determine if the student's misconduct is a result of the disability or due to an inappropriate placement. In making this determination, the IEP team shall consider all pertinent information, including current informal and standardized assessment data. Additional assessment may be necessary before the IEP team can make this decision (P&P Manual, p. 81). (62% responded correctly).
28. FALSE - Special education and related services must be provided through an Extended School Year program when determined by the IEP team that a child has regressed, or is predicted to regress, to such a severe degree in a critical skill area that recoupment of such skill loss following the summer break in programming is unlikely or would require an unusually long period of time (other factors are also given). (P&P Manual, p 6-7). (39% responded correctly).
29. TRUE - To be entitled to protection under Section 504, an individual must meet the definition of a handicapped person (see P&P Manual, p. 79), and be "otherwise qualified" for all of

criteria for eligibility under IDEA, are specific to the categories identified (P&P Manual, pp. 47-60). (51% responded correctly).

30. FALSE - In ordering reimbursement (Burlington School Committee v Department of Education, 1985) the court noted some limitations. "Parents who unilaterally change their child's placement do so at their own risk. Tuition reimbursement is not available if it is eventually determined that the district's proposed IEP was appropriate" (Mattison & Hakola, 1992). (81% responded correctly).

APPENDIX C

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION (INVOLVEMENT SURVEY)
SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF INVOLVEMENT SURVEY**

- T F 12. I understand the purpose of the special education forms I am asked to sign.
- T F 13. I understand my legal rights as a parent of a child with a disability.
- T F 14. I have access to a copy of the Policies and Procedures for Special Education in Oklahoma manual.
- T F 15. I understand the objectives listed on my child's IEP.
- T F 16. I notify my child's teacher of unusual circumstances at home.
- T F 17. I am aware of units or subjects my child is learning about in school.
- T F 18. I help my child with homework.
- T F 19. I have talked with my child's family members about disabilities.
- T F 20. I have talked with a professional outside the school system about my child's disability.
- T F 21. I know one person who is a child advocate.
- T F 22. I have talked to staff people with Pro Oklahoma about parent rights.
- T F 23. I am aware that I can contact the Oklahoma Disability Law Center about legal issues.
- T F 24. I know where to find the telephone number for the Office of Handicapped Concerns.
- T F 25. I have talked to a school administrator about my child's educational program.
- T F 26. I will ask a question when I do not understand a term or word.
- T F 27. I have requested additional evaluations be given to my child beyond the standard battery of tests given by the school.
- T F 28. I have asked that information in my child's file be amended.
- T F 29. I am aware that I may contact the Office of Civil Rights.
- T F 30. I am aware of mediation services to settle a dispute regarding my child's educational program.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF INVOLVEMENT INSTRUMENT

LEVEL I INVOLVEMENT

T 79%	F 21%	1. I have attended an IEP meeting this year.
T 32%	F 68%	2. I have volunteered in my child's classroom.
T 11%	F 89%	3. I have watched a video about my child's disability.
T 42%	F 58%	4. I have read a book about my child's disability.
T 93%	F 7%	9. I have questioned my doctor about disabilities.
T 53%	F 47%	11. I understand how disability affects performance.
T 90%	F 10%	15. I understand the objectives listed on my child's IEP.
T 84%	F 16%	16. I notify my child's teacher of unusual circumstances
T 93%	F 7%	17. I am aware of units or subjects my child is learning.
T 92%	F 8%	18. I help my child with homework.

LEVEL II INVOLVEMENT

T 14%	F 86%	5. I am a member of an [disabilities] organization.
T 79%	F 21%	6. I know other parents of children with disabilities.

- T F 7. I have attended special education parent meetings.
50% 50%
- T F 10. I know people to contact for information.
68% 32%
- T F 12. I understand the special education forms.
93% 7%
- T F 13. I understand my legal rights as a parent.
87% 13%
- T F 14. I have access to the Policies and Procedures
74% 26% manual.
- T F 19. I have talked with my family about disabilities.
89% 11%
- T F 25. I have talked to an administrator about my child.
85% 15%
- T F 26. I will ask a question when I do not understand.
98% 2%

LEVEL III INVOLVEMENT

- T F 8. I have contacted an agency outside the school.
34% 66%
- T F 20. I have talked with a professional outside the school.
59% 41%
- T F 21. I know one person who is a child advocate.
32% 68%
- T F 22. I have talked to staff people with Pro Oklahoma.
15% 85%
- T F 23. I am aware that I can contact the Law Center
56% 44%
- T F 24. I can find the Office of Handicapped Concerns.
50% 50%

- T F 27. I have requested additional evaluations.
22% 78%
- T F 28. I have asked that my child's file be amended.
18% 82%
- T F 29. I know I may contact the Office of Civil Rights.
61% 39%
- T F 30. I am aware of mediation services.
50% 50%

APPENDIX D

**COVER LETTER TO SPECIAL EDUCATION ADMINISTRATORS
DIRECTIONS TO COMPLETE THE CHILD COUNT DATA FORM
DIRECTIONS ON NOTIFYING THE PARENTS OF THE STUDY**

**Lesa Smith
Weleetka Public School
Weleetka, Oklahoma**

June 24, 1994

Dear Ms. Smith,

This letter is a request for your assistance in disseminating questionnaires to parents of students with disabilities. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Oklahoma State University and by the doctoral dissertation committee of Marilyn Wells. The title of the study is, *The Relationship Between Parent Involvement and Parent Knowledge of Legal Provisions Regarding Special Education*. Following are steps to follow with reference to enclosed forms. Your help is greatly appreciated. Upon completion of the study, a synopsis will be mailed to each participant.

Step 1: Complete Child Count Data Form

Step 2: Notify the parents of the study

Step 3: Complete the office use portion of the surveys

Step 4: Have the parent complete the packet in your presence

***Questions may be read but not explained to the parent**

Step 5: Notify Marilyn when you have completed packets of 10% of your population of students with disabilities.

If you have any questions at any time please do not hesitate to call. Work: 918-225-5600. Home: 405-547-2251.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Wells

Step 2: Notify the parents of the study

Because of confidentiality, it is necessary for you as the special education administrator to identify the parent of the record selected. The parent is the person who signed on the IEP. After the parent(s) are identified, please contact either by phone or personally to let them know they were selected to be a part of a study. Make arrangements for the parent to complete the questionnaire either in your or an appointee's presence. As the facilitator you will:

1. Sign and date (on the teacher line) the **Survey Participant Consent Form**. Maintain these completed forms. Marilyn will pick them up at a later date.
2. Have the subject read and sign the **Survey Participant Consent Form**.
3. Fill in the County number / School District number / Record number at the top right hand corner of each questionnaire. This is imperative for tracking purposes. You have just finished **Step 3**.

Step 4: Have the parent complete the packet in your presence. The packet consists of the True/False questionnaires. The first one is titled **Participant Information** and the second one is **Special Education Knowledge Assessment**. There is an envelope attached to the packet. After the parent completes the questionnaire, he/she will fold, insert, and seal it in the attached addressed envelope. I am requesting that the special education administrator mail the envelopes.

Step 5: Notify me when all the packets have been completed and mailed. I will pick up the consent forms and visit with you about the study. That completes the steps for the quantitative portion of this study. Thank you very much for your time and assistance. Remember to call if you have concerns or questions.

Twelve parents will be selected as representatives from various quadrants to be interviewed by the researcher. This qualitative segment of the study will be completed during the month of May 1994. You may destroy the list of parents names after July 1, 1994.

APPENDIX E

SURVEY PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Survey Participant Consent Form

General Information

You have been asked by a doctoral student at Oklahoma State University to be a part of study which examines parents' knowledge about special education law.

No names will be used in the data collection, involvement, or dissemination. No assessment instrument or data will be used unless this signed consent form has been received by the researcher.

Understanding

I understand that participation in this survey is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty.

I understand that the instrument will be conducted according to commonly accepted research procedures and that information taken from the cover page and instrument will be recorded in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

I understand the survey will not cover topics that could reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subject's financial standing or employability or deal with sensitive aspects of the subject's own behavior such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior, or use of alcohol.

I may contact the dissertation advisor, Dr. Gerald Bass, College of Education, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078; Telephone (405) 744-7244, should I wish further information about the research.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: _____ Time: _____ AM/PM

SIGNED: _____
(Signature of Subject)

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject before requesting the subject to sign it and provided the subject with a copy of this form.

DATE: _____ TIME: _____ AM/PM

SIGNED: _____
(Signature of Teacher)

FILED: INITIALS OF RESEARCHER _____ DATE: _____

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Interview Participant Consent Form

General Information

You have been asked by a doctoral student at Oklahoma State University to be a part of study which examines parents' knowledge about special education law.

No names will be used in the data analysis or dissemination of findings. No assessment instrument or data will be used unless this signed consent form has been received by the researcher.

Understanding

I understand that participation in this interview is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty.

I understand that the study will be conducted according to commonly accepted research procedures and that information taken from the cover page and instrument will be recorded in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

I understand the interview will not cover topics that could reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subject's financial standing or employability or deal with sensitive aspects of the subject's own behavior such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior, or use of alcohol.

I may contact the dissertation advisor, Dr. Gerald Bass, College of Education, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078; Telephone (405) 744-7244, should I wish further information about the research.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: _____ Time: _____ AM/PM

SIGNED: _____

(Signature of Subject)

Please contact me for the interview by:

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject before requesting the subject to sign it and provided the subject with a copy of this form.

DATE: _____ TIME: _____ AM/PM

SIGNED: _____

(Signature of Teacher)

FILED: INITIALS OF RESEARCHER _____ DATE: _____

APPENDIX G

EXCERPTS FROM TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEWS

Excerpts from Transcribed Interviews
(Code: Q = Question, R = Response)

Interview 1 (High Involvement - Low Knowledge)

Hello, my name is Marilyn Wells and I am completing a study for a degree at OSU. You signed the Consent form for this interview and if it is OK with you, I would like to ask you a few questions now.

Q. Tell me ways you are involved with your child's educational program?

R: "I attend his IEP meetings. I work with his teachers. I am available any time the teacher needs me, night or day. Uh, I have a computer at home with educational programs that he has access to. We watch Barney, which is very educational.

Q: Do you watch it with him.

R: "Oh yes - every day - all five of us! Uh... We watch alot of channel 11 and 13, and OETA.

Q: What about his IEP program?

R: His IEP program right now is very satisfactory.

Q: How are you involved with that?

R: I give them my comments, and my suggestions, and what I would like to see ... happen and if something doesn't happen that is fine. I mean, I don't have real high expectations, I kind of - you know- if he advances that's great, if he doesn't - well, he'll work harder. I don't get upset with the IEP. (laughs) I think the program they have him on - the way they have it set up is just fine

Q: Do you work on the objectives at home?

R: Yeah, pretty much, just being a little boy works on alot of it.

Q. Why do think it is important to understand the laws regarding the disabled?

R: Because the disabled are taken advantaged of - very badly, and not only for my child but any person - they need to know their rights, as a business person you need to know their rights what is expected of you. What you have to do - legally as far as like, accessibility, and the proper way to talk to the people and label

- I'm going to say label - you don't label them but basically you do when you talk with them -you know - talk about them.
You call them "persons with" instead of that disabled person.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to add?

R: No, that about covers it.

Thank - you.

Interview 2 (Low Involvement - High Knowledge)

Hello, my name is Marilyn Wells and I am completing a study for a degree at OSU. You signed the Consent form for this interview and if it is OK with you, I would like to ask you a few questions now.

Q: Tell me ways your are involved with your child's educational program.

R: Well, do you mean, like, I go to the IEP meeting. Everything works good. I really don't have time to get involved and all, I work and then am tired in the evening.

Q: Is there any way the school could help you be more involved?

R: Not particularly, I like things the way they are. My son had been in the special ed program for three years now. If I have a question I just ask the teacher.

Q: Why do think it is important to understand the laws regarding the disabled?

R: To know what we can ask for and not. Especially since my son is so young - only five - he needs teachers who know what they are talking about. His teachers really knows the laws and she takes care of Thomas.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to talk about in regard to involvement of parents and your understanding of special education laws?

R: No, I don't think so. I think the you all should be commended for the job you do. We are so proud of the progress Thomas has made over the past couple of years.

Thank you for your time and talking with me.

Interview 3 (High Involvement - High Knowledge)

Hello, my name is Marilyn Wells and I am completing a study for a degree at OSU. You signed the Consent form for this interview and if it is OK with you, I would like to ask you a few questions now.

Q: Tell me ways your are involved with your child's educational program.

R: Well, I am there on a daily basis, I take her or let her ride the bus. I'm there anytime they need me, anytime they ask me for my opinion, I go ahead and give it if I think it is for her best interest. That's the way I feel about it, anything for her best interest.

Q: Is there a way the school can help you be more involved?

R: Well, I would really like to see you get some summer classes - maybe three times a week in a structured setting to keep her in the habit - so she won't regress in the fall - to get her back in the habit. That's what I would like to see.

Q: You scored the highest score on the special education knowledge survey. How did you learn so much?

R: Well I helped Jennifer [my daughter] when she was going to St. Gregory's and she was taking mental retardation technology. I started about 16 years ago and just followed it ever since. Also, being a foster parent of a Hissom person, the DHS makes you go through alot of classes. I have always tried to further my education and I believe I'm just interested enough - she's worth it.

Q: Do you get your information from books, talking or how?

R: Well, talking, and reading articles.

Q: If we had videos, would you check them out?

R: Yes I would, I watched some in my training, when I trained for this - there are good ones in Nova and mental retardation. I had some videos and they are real interesting.

Q: Why do think it is important to understand the laws regarding the disabled?

R: So we can do what's good for Jenna. I think the school knows the laws. I learn most about the laws from DHS because of being a foster parent.

Q: Do you have any other comments about these topics of parent involvement and legal issues?

R: No, not really.

End: Thank you for your time.

Second Contact with Interview 3 (2)

Q: I was transcribing the tape recording we did this morning, and I had another question for you. Do you have time to talk to me?

R: Sure, how can I help?

Q: Sometimes the use of a recorder can affect what people say. What do you think?

R: Well, when you told me our conversation was going to be taped, I thought I should be more careful with what I said. I didn't know who might hear me- you know what I mean? Like maybe DHS or someone might listen to it.

Q: If I had not had the tape recorder going - what would you have said differently?

R: I probably wouldn't have said much different, only felt a little more easy talking. I probably would have complained more about different agencies and about extended school year more. I really don't like being taped, it makes me kinda nervous and I try to think more about my words instead of what I think.

Interview 4: (Low involvement, Low Knowledge)

Hello, my name is Marilyn Wells and I am completing a study for a degree at OSU. You signed the Consent form for this interview and if it is OK with you, I would like to ask you a few questions now.

Q: Can you tell me how you are involved with your child's educational program?

R: Well, my wife usually goes to the meetings at the school. Now are you the one are you talking about that test that Margaret gave me - right?

Follow-up: Right. I am following up the survey with an interview to find out more about parent involvement and knowledge of special education. Do you mind visiting with me for a while?

R: Nah, I don't mind. Don't know if I can be of much help. My wife goes to the school meetings and wasn't around when Margaret needed to get that paper filled out. So I did it. Couldn't read alot of the words and really don't know much about the laws. You probably saw I left blanks. We just count on Margaret and the missus to take care of the boy.

Q: You certainly have a great teacher. If Margaret asks you to help with homework, or to do something at home or even at school, what do you do?

R: Oh, lawsy, I try to help out- much as I can. The wife takes care of the little ones - feeding and all. I stay busy pretty much - outside. I do go when we take him to the doctors. He just now learning to walk and likes to come along with me out back - when it's not so hot.

Q. I bet you are proud, he is able to walk. If I could ask one more question, then I will be finished. Why do think it is important to understand the laws regarding the disabled?

R: I don't know much about such laws. Like I told you, Margret takes care of the boy so I don't worry much bout laws and such.

End: Well, I guess that ends our talk, thank you for your time and talking with me.

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VITA

Marilyn K. Wells

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: THE RELATIONSHIP OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT TO
PARENT KNOWLEDGE OF LEGAL PROVISIONS
REGARDING SPECIAL EDUCATION.

Major Field: Educational Administration

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Stillwater, Oklahoma, January 27, 1950,
the daughter of Harvey R. Brixey and Erma Lee Franklin
Jackson.

Education: Received Bachelor of Science Degree in Special
Education from Central State University, Edmond,
Oklahoma, in May 1972; received the Master of Science
Degree in Applied Behavioral Sciences from Oklahoma
State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, in July 1974;
completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education
Degree at Oklahoma State University in December 1994.

Professional Experience: Learning Disabilities Teacher, Skyline
Elementary School, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1972-1975 and
1979-1980; OSU Exceptional Child Clinic Teacher and
Instructor, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1976-1978; Assistant
Director of Special Services Co-op, Cushing Public Schools,
Cushing, Oklahoma, 1980-1981; Director of Special
Services Co-op, Cushing Public Schools, Cushing,
Oklahoma, 1981 to present.

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 03-23-94

IRB#: ED-94-057

Proposal Title: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND PARENT KNOWLEDGE OF LEGAL PROVISIONS REGARDING SPECIAL EDUCATION

Principal Investigator(s): Dr. Gerald Bass, Marilyn Wells

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): APPROVED

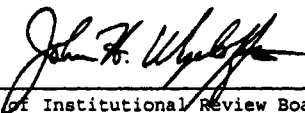
APPROVAL STATUS SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT MEETING.

APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR ONE CALENDAR YEAR AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL. ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Reasons for Deferral or Disapproval are as follows:

Provisions received and approved.

Signature:



Chair of Institutional Review Board

Date: March 23, 1994