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SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' AND
PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PARENT
INVOLVEMENT IN SPECIAL EDUCATION IN
THREE BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A Dissertation Presented

by

ALVIN LEONARD CRAWLEY

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 1990

School of Education

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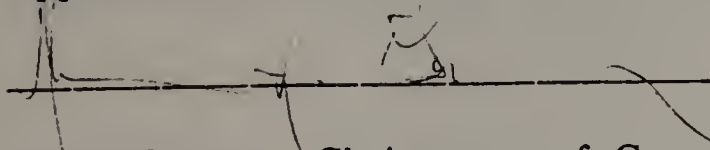
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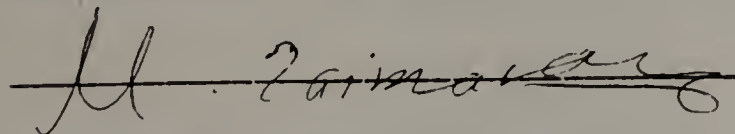
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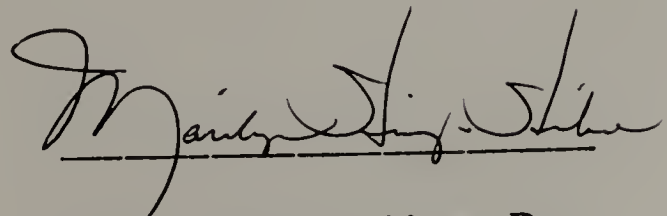
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First giving honor to God without whom none of this would have been possible.

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Finally, thanks to all the wonderful parents, special education teachers and Boston Public School personnel for providing me with the information to complete this project. Peace.

ABSTRACT

SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' AND PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS
OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SPECIAL EDUCATION IN THREE
BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MAY 1990

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Parents' and special education teachers' perceptions of parent involvement in special education were studied in three Boston Public Schools. Parent involvement was ascertained based on a number of variables related to communication, decision making and participation in school activities. The study assessed how parents currently perceive their role in the special education process, satisfaction with their child's special education program and how they would like to participate in school special education activities. The study similarly assessed special education teachers' perceptions of parent involvement

in various activities and decision making, satisfaction with school practices and efforts to facilitate active parent involvement.

The information for this study was collected through two questionnaires and a follow up teacher interview question to assess the school's monitoring practices and procedures as it relates to special education. Questionnaires were distributed by mail to 463 parents and 38 teachers. Completed questionnaires were received from 106 parents and 33 special education teachers for a total of 139 respondents. Oral interviews were completed on 33 teacher subjects to assess opinions regarding school monitoring practices and procedures.

The responses of the two groups were analyzed using a t-test. Results were described through a discussion based on major and minor hypotheses. Responses were compared to existing laws and past research findings related to parent involvement.

The results of this study were consistent with the findings of earlier studies. Parents and teachers indicated a desire for more parent involvement. School distance, income, and household status did not affect parent participation. Variables found to have a significant difference in preferred level of involvement were race and educational level of parent.

Major reasons cited by parents as barriers to more parental involvement were work and household commitments such as taking care of younger children. The majority of teachers cited similar responses as reasons for lack of parent involvement.

The study also revealed that 43.4% of parents surveyed do not feel knowledgeable enough about special education laws and procedures to make informed decisions regarding their child.

In general, it appears parents are satisfied with their child's special education program, but still are not "equal participants".

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act established a role for parents as members of the Individual Education Plan team for their handicapped child. The parent's role in the Individualized Education Planning (IEP) process has been clarified in the requirements issued by the United States Office of Special Education. It states the following:

The IEP meeting serves as a communication vehicle between parents and school personnel, and enables them, as equal participants, to jointly decide what the child's needs are, what services will be provided to meet those needs and what the anticipated outcome may be (Federal Register, January 19, 1981, p. 5462).

The underlying assumption of Massachusetts state law Chapter 766, the state's major special education law, and Public Law 94-142 was that the best way to ensure that each handicapped child would receive an appropriate education was to involve those who knew him or her best and have the child's best interest at heart (in reference to parents) in the formulation of the Individualized Education Plan. The passage

of Public Law 94-142 and Massachusetts Law Chapter 766 which serves as the major special education law in lieu of PL-94-142 benefited parents by: 1) guaranteeing an appropriate education mandated by law; and 2) emphasizing parents as partners in the decision making process. This was a positive change from the traditional parent-school personnel relationship. School personnel no longer had the authority to unilaterally make decisions regarding final placement, programs and services. Public Law 94-142 and Massachusetts state law Chapter 766 formed the basis for changes in treatment and attitudes toward parents.

The results of an examination of parent participation in the Individualized Education Planning Process after passage of Public Law 94-142 produced unexpected results. Research (Lynch & Stein, 1982; Turnbull & Winton, 1984; Roit & Pfohl, 1984) indicated that most parents played a passive role rather than an active one underlying the policy intent of the law. Their participation was essentially confined to receiving information from school personnel. Occasionally parents were asked to verify or contribute information pertaining to home matters.

There is evidence that supports the notion that parents seem generally satisfied with their role of giver and receiver of information relevant to their child (Lusthaus et al., 1981). It

has also been suggested that parents are regulated to passive roles because school personnel do not view parents as having the expertise to contribute to educational decision making (Shore, 1986; Yoshida et al., 1978 Morgan & Rhode, 1983).

Statement of the Problem

According to federal law Public Law 94-142 and Massachusetts state law Chapter 766, parents have the right to be actively involved in all decisions regarding their special needs child; however, a review of past and current practices indicate that parent participation is typically passive, limited to giving and receiving information relevant to their child, and in many cases, simply signing educational plans (IEP) with little knowledge of its contents and impact on future services and service delivery.

These practices are cause for great concern since both laws were designed to empower parents to have a greater voice in the educational decisions affecting their special needs child. Ironically, parents are usually the ones least prepared to actively participate in IEP meetings since they possess the least amount of knowledge pertaining to laws, advocacy, rights, resources and special education procedures. Departments of education and school systems have gone through great lengths

to train special education teachers and support staff on special education laws and IEP meeting procedures and expectations, but provide little or no training and resources to parents (and significant others within the family and community) on local and federal special education policies and procedures.

Haphazard attempts to get parents to IEP meetings and quick explanations of special education rights and procedures coupled with other existing conditions such as decreased school flexibility, lack of availability, poor school-community relations, lack of systemwide procedures to monitor parent involvement and non-compliance issues (prevalent in many school systems) have resulted in parents who feel intimidated, angry and alienated by the special education process. McAffee and Vergason (1979) state:

Law may provide an impulse that initiates change in momentum, but real and meaningful parent involvement grows out of community values, power balance, parent and teacher expectations, economics, and general social climate existing within the school, the district, the state, and the nation (p.3).

Given the history of such practices, it is questionable whether these occurrences are a deliberate systemic means of exclusion to maintain control of special education or lack of appropriate utilization of resources to demystify the special

education process for parents. While it is unrealistic to expect all parents to participate as equal decision making members, it is vital to develop practices and policies that can be tailored to better meet the needs of parents accounting for parent's interests, abilities, time availability and preferences for involvement. We must also consider such issues as family stress, parent burnout, educational values and parent expectations.

There may be multiple benefits and beneficiaries of active parent participation in the special education process. Parent participation creates a partnership with the school to form mutual goals of improving student academic achievement and social development. Active participation demystifies the special education process in that it allows parents to successfully advocate for their child and assist in the assessment, determination of special education and related services, selection of long and short term goals, mainstreaming opportunities and evaluation process. School personnel are educated or re-educated on various issues related to the child from the parent's perspective and vice versa.

Since the passage of Public Law 94-142 in 1975, there have been numerous articles and information pamphlets published and distributed on the rights of parents to school personnel and parents. Parent involvement has been studied

from different perspectives over the last fifteen years; however, few researchers have studied parents and educators within the same system and assessed actual parent participation in school special education activities. Also, there are few studies that have been conducted in large urban school systems where the majority of the student special needs population are minorities. Thus, the perceptions of parents from the nondominant culture have not been adequately addressed.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to ascertain parents and special education teacher's perceptions of parent involvement in special education on a number of variables related to communication, participation and decision making. Two questionnaires (parent and special education teacher) served as instruments to compare the perceptions of parents and special education teachers. It is important to ascertain how parents currently perceive their role in the special education process and how they would like to participate, and similarly examine special education teacher's perceptions of involvement for themselves and parents. Both groups' perceptions were compared to existing laws.

In addition to the issue of current and preferred levels of involvement, this study attempted to answer the following questions:

- 1) Do existing school policies and procedures encourage or discourage active parent participation in the special education process?
- 2) How is involvement currently monitored in schools to assess participation at the level mandated by law?
- 3) What are the barriers to active parent involvement that parents face (based on parent and teacher perceptions)?
- 4) What can schools do to better serve special needs children and their parents?
- 5) What can be done to facilitate more parent involvement in schools?
- 6) Do parents really understand the special process and their rights under Massachusetts state law Chapter 766?

Significance of the Study

A decade after the passage of Public Law 94-142, school systems continue to face the dilemma of how to get parents

actively involved in the special education process, as parents continue to play a passive role in the IEP process, acting as recipients of information instead of full fledged members of the team.

It has become increasingly apparent that in order to get parents involved at levels which they comfortably have an active voice, their perceptions of special education and special education process have to be better assessed. Without detailed information through a study of this nature, school systems will continue to find parents playing passive roles in their child's educational placement and programming.

This study involved the use of a questionnaire for parents and special education teachers. A follow-up interview question regarding monitoring practices was also used as a means of examining school parent involvement efforts. Given the limited available data on minority parent perspective, this study will hopefully serve as a useful tool to reeducate school systems that have not been sensitive to minority issues, especially as the number of minority children enrolled in special education continues to rise at a disproportionately higher rate than Anglo Americans. Lynch & Stein (1987) addresses this problem stating:

Most of the work has been directed toward Anglo-American families-families which, despite their

diversity, are accustomed to a democratic society that values shared decision making, teamwork, and the right to question those in authority. Few studies have been conducted to investigate the ways in which parents of handicapped children from the nondominant culture have responded to the rights provided by Public Law 94-142. (p.105)

Also, this study allowed for teacher input regarding their perceptions of parent involvement, a perspective that often has not been adequately considered by school administrators.

Studying parent and special education teacher perceptions of parent involvement at the elementary, middle and high school levels provide qualitative data which may be used to improve services, service delivery and available resources as well as delineate specific areas of strengths and weaknesses in each school.

In summary, the results of this research assists school systems in their efforts to improve home-school relations by:

- 1) providing a basis for the development of progressive strategies to better facilitate parent involvement; and 2)

increasing awareness and understanding of the parental role in the special education Individual Educational Planning process.

Overview of the Study

The study ascertained special education teachers' and parents' (of special needs children) perceptions of parent involvement in the areas of participation, communication and decision making. Data was collected based on a questionnaire developed by Nancy Horner with the addition of questions formulated by the researcher. A follow-up interview question concerning monitoring practices was also included in the study. The study subjects represented a diverse population culturally, linguistically and economically. The responses of the two groups were transcribed and analyzed using a t-test and description of results. Results of this study were described through a discussion based on five major and five minor hypotheses. The responses of the two groups were also compared to existing laws and policies.

Research Hypotheses

Five major and five minor hypotheses were developed to ascertain parent and school personnel perceptions of parent involvement. Each hypothesis is presented in the form of the null hypothesis. The following hypotheses were examined:

Hypothesis 1: There are no significant differences

between parents' and special education teachers' perceptions of current involvement opportunities.

Hypothesis 2: There are no significant differences between the perceptions of parents and special education teachers concerning preferred involvement opportunities.

Hypothesis 3: There are no significant differences between the perceptions of parents on current and preferred parent involvement opportunities.

Hypothesis 4: There are no significant differences between the perceptions of special education teachers regarding current and preferred parent involvement opportunities.

Hypothesis 5: There are no significant differences between the perceptions of parents and special education teachers on current and preferred parent involvement opportunities.

Minor Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no difference between the preferred level of involvement for parents from the non-dominant culture and Caucasian parents.

Hypothesis 2: There is no difference in preferred level of involvement for parents living within the community and those living outside the general community. This item looked at whether school distance, location and community ties are factors in parental involvement.

Hypothesis 3: There is no difference in preferred level of involvement between single parent households and two parent households.

Hypothesis 4: There is no difference in preferred level of involvement for college educated parents and those without college educations.

Hypothesis 5: There is no difference between preferred involvement for high income parents and low income parents.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are offered to clarify the language used throughout this research project:

Individualized Education Plan. The plan that is developed by the evaluation team. It describes any special need that the student has, what services will

be provided to meet those needs and the anticipated outcome.

Individualized Education Plan Team. This is commonly referred to as the Evaluation Team. It is a group of specifically trained persons usually consisting of parents, special education teacher, regular education teacher, support personnel (i.e. speech pathologist), school nurse, evaluation team leader and any others deemed necessary to assist the parent and child. The purpose of the team is to decide what the child's strengths and weaknesses are, and what the child needs to learn and participate more effectively in school.

Parent. Used to refer to a father or mother, guardian, person acting as a parent of the child, or surrogate parent. By law, a student who is eighteen years of age or older may act on his/her own behalf in place of the parent. Students over 14 years of age also have the right to be involved in decisions about their education.

Active Parental Involvement. A comprehensive term that advocates the education and training of parents to

utilize their talents and skills to make decisions that will promote better welfare for them, their child and school. This definition takes into account mental, physical, emotional and social needs which can be met through parental involvement. Additionally, Mopsik and Agard (1985) define active participation as "parents who work closely with school personnel, raise questions regarding terms they do not understand, state the educational goals and preferences they have for the child, offer suggestions regarding possible instructional strategies and voice their agreement or disagreement with placement and program decisions." (p.67).

Passive Parental Involvement. It involves the parent providing information about the child's home behavior to school evaluation teams and attending conferences regarding the child but remaining an observer except when offering additional information or agreeing to the action proposed.

Regular Education. This is usually referred to as the "mainstream." Educational programming for children who do not exhibit educational problems that require

special teaching techniques and who can have their educational needs met in a regular classroom.

Special Education. Educational programming for students whose educational difficulties necessitate a specifically trained teacher for a time ranging from a small portion of the day to the majority of the school day. In Massachusetts, the type of special education program the child will receive services in and how much time, if any, he or she will spend outside the regular classroom depends on the prototype.

Prototypes are as follows:

Prototype 502.1- A regular classroom program slightly changed with special services added.

Accommodations are made within the classroom.

Prototype 502.2- A regular classroom program with up to 25% of the time spent in specialized services.

Prototype 502.3- A regular classroom program with up to 60% of the time spent in specialized services.

Prototype 502.4- A special class inside a regular public school, in a small group, composed of students with similar special needs.

Prototype 502.5- A day school program held in a building separate from the regular school.

Prototype 502.6- A residential program which requires that a child live at a separate school.

Prototype 502.7- A home or hospital program.

Prototype 502.8- A preschool program for children three and four years old. It may be 1) a home program where school personnel make home visits and provide instruction for the parents, materials for the child and provide group sessions for the parents, 2) an integrated program where up to 50% of the children may have special needs or 3) a separate program where more than 50% of the children have special needs.

Prototype 502.9- A diagnostic program for up to eight (8) weeks to help the Evaluation Team learn enough to recommend an appropriate program.

This program is used when the usual assessments do not tell enough about the child's needs.

Prototype 502.10- A program provided through the Bureau facilities under the control of the State Departments of Mental Health, Public Health, and Youth Services or other agencies.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of related literature is concerned with a) an overview of the rationale for parent involvement and b) a review of current studies on parental involvement in the development of the Individual Education Plan from school personnel and parent perspectives.

The first section provides background information and considerations for parental involvement as mandated by the federal government's Public Law 94-142 and Massachusetts state law Chapter 766. This section presents an overview of historical, legal and research rationales for parent involvement in the IEP process. Massachusetts law Chapter 766 is discussed in conjunction with Public Law 94-142 since it was established prior to Public Law 94-142 and is the special education guide currently used to meet federal government standards.

The second section examines studies on current levels of parent participation and perceptions of the relationship between parents and school personnel in the IEP decision making process. These studies help clarify existing levels of participation delineated in federal laws pertaining to parent

involvement in the development of the Individual Education Plan.

Rationale for Parent Participation

Historical Rationale. It was in the early seventies that concern for parental involvement in the education and training of handicapped children reached its height. During that time a great deal of literature was published in magazines and newspapers pertaining to how parents could be more assertive in the educational process. These articles were directed at parents of handicapped and normal children. Parents were influenced by articles that related to the findings of Bruner (1970) and others reporting that the early years were the years of most rapid growth and noting the importance of monitoring and supporting the child during this rapid period. Sputnik developments which rapidly expanded the need for increased technical knowledge and recognition of the rights of individuals to their own lifestyles (even if the lifestyle had previously been considered deviant) also had an impact on parental awareness (Brown and Moersch, 1979).

The trend toward parental involvement in all aspects of their children's lives developed as a result of research findings on the results of institutionalization, recognition of the positive and negative results of specific child rearing practices over the

world and interest in mother-child attachment. This new interest in parental involvement benefited handicapped populations greatly for it was this interest that sparked changes in how we viewed handicapped children.

The Association for Retarded Children (now known as the Association for Retarded Citizens) and other parent organizations had a tremendous impact on provisions for the handicapped. President Kennedy's family was very involved in handicap legislature and is credited with resulting legislation which provided for the care of mentally retarded persons and training of personnel to provide care.

Prior to the passage of Public Law 94-142, more than half of the handicapped children in the United States were not receiving an appropriate education. Handicapped children were not provided with any sort of public school education. There was little comparison between the education that normal children received and that of handicapped children. Programs available were often limited in services, operating on low budgets, high in tuition costs, provided no transportation and were usually no more than baby-sitting services.

Parents of handicapped children banded together and with help of other lobbyists applied pressure on the government for increased funding and programming, and mandatory laws for the handicapped.

Nationally, two important court cases affecting the education of special needs children were *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1971) and *Mills v. Washington, D.C. Board of Education* (1972). The *PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* ruling granted all mentally retarded children full access to free public education. The *Mills v. Washington, D.C. Board of Education* affirmed the right of all handicapped children to a publicly supported education, including appropriate alternatives for those unable to attend regular classes or school. This decision also required school systems to guarantee exceptional students the constitutional protections of due process and equal participation under the law (Davis, 1986).

In October 1975, Congress enacted Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. On November 29, 1975 it was signed into law by President Gerald Ford. This law guarantees a free and appropriate public education for children ages three to twenty-one, regardless of any handicap they might have. While the law offered financial incentives to states that agreed to carry out its provisions, the subsequent issuances of the regulations for 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 made these provisions mandatory.

As a result of Public Law 94-142, parents of handicapped students were assured the right to participate in the

assessment and program planning process for their child. Parents had the power to become equal partners with school personnel in the decision making process.

The history of Massachusetts state law Chapter 766 paralleled what occurred on the national level and the events leading to the passage of Public Law 94-142. Prior to the passage of PL-94-142, the General Court in Massachusetts found great variations of services to children with special needs. The General Court also found past methods of labeling and defining the needs of children to have a stigmatizing effect on children. Program were overly rigid in content and inconsistent in their inclusion and exclusion policies.

As a result, Massachusetts enacted special education legislation which contains similar provisions of PL-94-142. The Massachusetts Comprehensive Education Law, Chapter 766 was passed in 1972. It became effective in September 1974. The purpose of this act was to provide for a flexible and uniform system of special education opportunities for all children requiring special education. Chapter 766 served as a model for PL94-142.

While Chapter 766 has been hailed as a model special education right-to-education law, it has encountered problems in consistency and implementation in Massachusetts, particularly in the Boston Public School System. In 1975. a

report, "Special Education in Boston: The Mandate and Reality," was prepared by the Massachusetts Advocacy Center. It concluded that the Boston Public School system was in non-compliance with Chapter 766 of the the Massachusetts General Laws and that progress towards implementation of the law had been too slow. In January 1976, an investigation by the director of the Massachusetts Advocacy Center and Boston Advisory Group revealed backlogs of overdue reviews and evaluations.

The court case, *Allen v. McDonough* initiated on June 10, 1976 was the first class action suit brought against a school system in Massachusetts for non-compliance with Chapter 766. It was filed by three public interest law firms alleging the denial of services to students with special needs in Boston. A consent decree granting immediate relief for the plaintiff class was approved on June 2, 1976 and subsequent supplemental consent decree was filed August 10, 1976. and approved on September 17, 1976. On November 24, 1976, the court entered an implementing order extending the outside time limits for action to be taken on overdue student placements. The Boston Public Schools were unable to achieve compliance and remained in violation of the Court Order. Two years later the Boston Public Schools were still in non-compliance. In 1980, an independent monitor was appointed by Judge Thomas Morse,

Jr. This court monitor was terminated on August 15, 1983 and the independent monitors were given the responsibility.

In 1984, the Boston Public Schools established its own monitoring process through the Department of Student Support Services. This unit was called the Comprehensive Internal Program Review Process (CIPRP). The purpose of the Comprehensive Internal Program Review Process was to monitor compliance and effectiveness of special education programs through a systematic monitoring and evaluation process. The Comprehensive Internal Program Review Process was seen as a proactive monitoring procedure to allow Boston to internalize its responsibility for meeting the compliance requirements of Chapter 766 and PL94-142.

At present, the CIPRP is still in effect in the Boston Public School System. However, at the time of this research project, the State Department of Education had ordered the withholding of at least one million dollars in federal funds because of its continued violation of Massachusetts special education law. This measure is the most serious action taken against the Boston Public School System since parents of special needs children filed suit against the school department (Allen v. McDonough) for failing to provide adequate services. The school system has failed to comply with 49 of 95 areas. Three of the most glaring problems are the inability of the school system to

provide parents with an educational plan for their children within the required time limit, a failure to translate the plans for parents with limited English, and not hiring a bilingual speech therapist for whom money was appropriated last year in the city's budget.

Legal Requirement. The key requirements mandated by Public Law 94-142 and Massachusetts state law Chapter 766 as it pertains to parental rights are summarized by Turnbull (1983):

1. Each handicapped child in a local school system must be provided with an appropriate special education, including related services at no cost to the parents.
2. Parents have the right to examine all education records that the school has in their child's file. The right to review school records includes the following: they have the right to read records and request that information in the records be changed because of inaccuracies or violations of privacy. The only exception to these rights are those lost under state law concerning matters like guardianship.
3. Parents should be given written notice prior to an initial meeting describing proposed action and

voluntarily give their consent for evaluation.

4. Parents must receive a notice of the IEP meeting.
It should contain the following information:
purpose, time, location and persons attending the meeting.
5. Individual Education Plan meetings may be held without the parents present only when documented attempts to involve the parents have been unsuccessful.
6. Parents who are unsatisfied with the school evaluation team findings have the right to request an independent evaluation performed by someone not employed by the school. Outside evaluations are to be considered in discussions regarding programming and school placement decisions.
7. Parents have the right of confidentiality of information pertaining to their child. No one legally has the right to look at the child's record except school personnel responsible for educating the child. Access to or release of records cannot be gained unless parents receive a written statement explaining the purpose for such a release. They must also give their written consent before

information can be released to an unauthorized person or agency.

8. Parents have the right to participate in their child's IEP meeting as equal participants with school personnel.
9. Parents are entitled to receive an explanation of any actions proposed or rejected in regard to evaluation results.
10. Parents have the right to impartial due process hearings if they disagree with the provisions of the educational plan. At hearings, parents may have legal counsel, present evidence, cross examine witnesses and obtain written findings of the proceedings. Due process hearings must be conducted in a language or communication mode understandable to parents. (p.110).

Prior to the passage of PL-94-142 and Chapter 766, the most obvious barrier was that schools were not legally required to involve parents which went against the Constitutional right of parents to act for their children and the child's right to procedural and substantive due process and equal protection. These rights have Constitutional justification as long as parents have the right and responsibility to act on

behalf of their children. Public Law 94-142 and Chapter 766's parental participation requirements served as a legal tool to decrease inappropriate practices such as: 1) handicapped children remaining in the same program for years without adequate reevaluation, 2) exceptional children placed in programs without their parents' permission or knowledge, and 3) exceptional children placed in restrictive educational classes and denied opportunities for contact with non-handicapped children (Morgan, 1981, p.3).

Research Rationale. Within the legislative history of PL94-142 there is a clear assumption that there were to be many benefits and beneficiaries of mandated parental participation in the IEP process (Morgan, 1981, Turnbull, Turnbull & Wheat, 1982). It was assumed that schools would benefit from parental involvement (Heward et al., 1979) and parents would benefit from participation (Nazzaro, 1979). It was also assumed that the child would benefit socially and academically. These assumptions were not based on recorded data citing any specific benefits of parental involvement in the IEP other than studies suggesting that parental involvement in intervention programs is beneficial (Lilli & Trohanis, 1976; Tjossen, 1976).

Shea and Baurer (1985) provide the following comprehensive set of rationales for involving parents in the Individual Education planning process:

- 1) Parents in most cases have a better idea of their child's needs and abilities than school personnel. The parent can provide valuable information regarding developmental history, medical history, previous testing and results, and strengths and weaknesses outside of school in areas such as peer relations, sibling relations, behavior, communicative competence, self-help skills and daily living skills.
- 2) The IEP meeting can serve as a learning experience for parents. This meeting provides the parent with the opportunity to receive detailed information about their child's strengths and weaknesses in school. Parents get the opportunity to discuss test results with the various specialist (i.e. psychologist, speech pathologist). These specialist can provide the parent with suggestions for remediation of deficits and procedures for eliciting specific behaviors. Participation in the IEP meeting allow parents the opportunity to provide input pertaining to future goals and objectives, services, and service

delivery. These are important issues because the school is not obligated to provide any related services that are not written into the Individual Education Plan.

3. Parental participation in the IEP meeting provide school personnel with an opportunity to become acquainted with parents and their specific needs or problems concerning their child. Parents can provide insight into home situations (such as possible divorce, parent sickness, financial hardship) that may have an impact on the child's progress. School records can be reviewed and inaccurate information can be corrected.
4. Parent involvement fosters positive parent-teacher communication and reduces miscommunication. A good relationship between teacher and parent allows both parties to discuss the child openly and honestly. As a consequence, the teacher becomes a helpful ally.
5. Active involvement would have a positive effect on the child's academic and social development and may increase success in school. Consistency through mutual goal planning and cooperation protects the child from frustration, anxiety, and

confusion. Consistency also helps the child develop personal values and standards.

6. Parental involvement would greatly benefit the school and community. Parents who are comfortable with their child's school program and school may tend to be more supportive of school-community endeavors. Also, trusting relationships between parents and schools could reduce the number of law suits, protests and general mistrust, and increase accountability to the exceptional child. (pp.60-64).

Although the assumptions of PL94-142 and expectations for increased parental involvement were high, research findings indicate that parents have not participated as actively as predicted.

Review of Studies on Parent Involvement

This section examines parent involvement in the IEP process. The first part reviews studies on school personnels' perceptions of the extent of parent involvement. The second part examines studies on parent perceptions of involvement. Both sections examine satisfaction of parents and educators.

Studies on School Personnels' Perceptions. Some researchers suggest that schools have unknowingly and sometimes deliberately created barriers to active parental involvement in the IEP and these barriers are related to the attitudes and competencies of both school personnel and parents.

Goldstein, Strickland, Turnbull and Curry (1980) performed an observational study of 14 IEP conferences in three North Carolina school districts to assess what actually happens in the IEP meeting. The meetings concerned children in grades two through six. These children were classified as mildly mentally retarded or learning disabled. They found that parental participation in the IEP meeting was limited, even though parental attendance was high. Parental involvement was characterized by being passive and limited primarily to listening to school personnel. Meetings typically lasted 36 minutes and consisted of a resource teacher reviewing an already developed education plan. The teacher was observed talking more than twice as much as the parent. The majority of parents observed expressed the desire to work with their child at home. Teachers were generally unresponsive and provided few suggestions to parents.

Goldstein and Turnbull (1982) did a follow up study and found that the majority of parent contributions in the IEP

meeting were on the topic of personal/family issues, not on such issues as evaluation, curriculum and placement.

These observations were consistent with nationwide findings. In the Second Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of Public Law 94-142 (1980), one of the major concerns presented was in the area of parental involvement in the IEP process. Only about half of all scheduled IEP meetings were attended by parents and their roles were generally passive.

Simpson (1982) suggested two reasons educators have made few efforts to involve parents in the educational decision making process. Some school personnel believe that educational decisions should be made strictly by educators, not to be shared with parents, and other school personnel consider parents the cause of many of their children's problems.

These sentiments are supported by the findings of Yoshida (1976) and Maxwell (1978). In 1976, they surveyed 1,526 placement and program members in Connecticut on their view of parent of parent's appropriate role on their children's educational planning team. They found that half of the school personnel (administrators, supportive and instructional personnel) selected only two appropriate activities for parents. They were: presenting information relevant to the case and gathering information relevant to the case. The researchers

concluded that the planning team expected parents to provide information but not to participate in decision making about their child's program. The researchers suggested that educational personnel's attitude play a significant role in the actual contribution that parents make.

Gilliam and Coleman (1981) conducted a survey in southeastern Michigan that examined the comparative influence of various team members before and after the IEP meeting. The sample consisted of 130 people representing 15 roles (parent, principal, psychologist, etc.) who had participated in 27 meetings in three school districts. Their findings indicated that parents' role in influencing or contributing to IEP committee decisions is lower than that of the special education teacher, psychologist, other ancillary personnel, special education directors, supervisors, consultants or regular classroom teachers. Psychologists and special education teachers were viewed as the most influential before and after the meeting. There was more fluctuation with other participants. Parents were ranked in 6th place before the IEP meeting, but dropped to 10th after the meeting.

Morgan and Rhode (1983) performed a follow up study on teacher attitudes toward IEPs. The original study was performed in Utah in 1978 and follow up two years later. Overall, no significant differences were found between the

attitudes expressed in 1978 and 1980. Teachers in both studies expressed a moderately negative attitude toward IEPs. Using a Likert scale where 1 equaled strongly disagree and 7 equaled strongly agree (4 was neutral), they found the following on selected items relevant to the purpose of the study:

1. Parents do not know enough about education to help in the development of the IEP. (Mean 1978=3.9; Mean 1981= 4.1)
11. My IEPs could not have been adequately developed if it hadn't been for the help of the handicapped child's parent. (Mean 1978= 2.8; Mean 1980=3.0)
19. Getting the cooperation of parents in developing the IEPs is very difficult. (Mean 1978= 4.6; Mean 1980-4.4)
27. In the development of the IEP, parents are not able able to contribute to the selection of the goals and short term objectives. (Mean 1978- 4.0; Mean 1980 = 3.7) (Morgan & Rhode, 1983, p. 65).

Brooks (1984) performed a study in three school districts in New Castle, Delaware (Christina, Red Clay and Colonial) to ascertain how school personnel and parents perceived parent participation in the IEP and to determine if there were any

significant difference between the two groups. The information was collected through a survey of 112 parents of special needs students and 187 educators. A t-test analysis was used to compare the two groups. Results of the survey indicate that parents and school personnel recognized the parent functions of advocate, provider and receiver of information, and decision maker which was a more positive view than earlier studies. Both groups indicated that the Individual Education Plan process has a positive impact on children's education programs and on their parents' involvement; however, on 15 of 19 research items there was a significant difference between the two groups on their perceptions of parent involvement. Parents saw themselves as more involved than did school personnel.

Horner (1986) performed a study in the Portland (Oregon) Public Schools of school personnel and parent ratings of current and preferred involvement in special education in the areas of communication, decision making and activities. A random sample procedure was used to gather subjects. Written questionnaires were completed by 323 educators. Sixty five held non-special education assignments. One hundred and twenty four (124) parents completed questionnaires. Data was analyzed with the assistance of the Statistical Analysis Package for the Social Sciences (computer software) and the use of t-tests. She found that parents preferred a greater level of

involvement in decision making activities and frequency of communication than they currently experienced. Educators also preferred a significantly higher level of involvement for most parents than they currently experienced. Educators preferred a higher level of participation in activities by parents than parents. Parents preferred similar roles in decision making regardless of the child's age, type of placement in special education or income level. Increased level of parent education had a slight effect on preference for a greater role in decision making and participation in parent activities.

Gerber, Banbury, Miller and Griffin (1986) conducted a study to investigate special educators' perceptions of parental involvement in the IEP process and to determine how teachers view IEP proceedings. This study consisted of 145 special education teachers from Louisiana (25.5%), Alabama (15.2%), West Virginia (13.8%), Texas (15.2%), Illinois (24.1%) and Florida (6.2%). The study included 66 teachers of self-contained classes (45.8%) and 78 resource room teachers (54.2%). An IEP opinionnaire was used to obtain information. Results of the study indicated that special educators have diverse opinions regarding parental participation in the development of the IEP.

Over half of the respondents surveyed indicated that parent participation in the formulation of the IEP had merit. The majority of the teachers surveyed (71%) indicated that

parents should have the option to waive the requirements of parent participation and place the decision making in the hands of school personnel. Sixty-three percent (63%) of those surveyed indicated that a waiver was not detrimental to the IEP process citing that a prewritten IEP would not significantly affect parent participation. Only 51% of the special educators viewed the IEP meeting as an opportunity to involve parents and 43% perceived the meeting as a formality. Nearly half (42%) did not perceive themselves as intimidating parents and 48.6% viewed the IEP process as a non-intimidating procedure. The researchers stressed the need for district wide training programs for parents to assist them in understanding and participating in the IEP process or teacher training programs aimed at teaching teachers how to educate and involve parents in the IEP decision making process.

Studies on Parent Perceptions. In studies involving parent perceptions of involvement it was found that parent perception of involvement often differed significantly than school personnels' perceptions of parent involvement.

Lynch and Stein (1982) conducted a study on parental participation involving a random sample of 328 parents. Nearly 71% of the families interviewed felt that they were actively involved in the development of their child's IEP, but when asked how they were involved, parents generally gave

responses that did not connote involvement. When asked why they felt they were active participants, parents frequently indicated that they had expressed opinions and made suggestions (14.6%), they had worked with, helped and trusted the school personnel who had set up the programs and goals (11.2 %), they had listened and agreed to the teachers' recommendations (7.5%), and they understood everything that was going on because it was explained clearly and in detail (6.3%). Forty-seven of the parents who felt involved reported that they offered suggestions during the IEP meeting.

Although 36 different types of suggestions were offered, those with the highest frequency were parents stating feelings about the child (33%) and parents stating feelings about the child's capabilities, problems and needs (9.6%). Over 60% of the families interviewed expressed the desire to work with teachers in accomplishing IEP goals and objectives. Nearly 70% felt that they could address some of the goals and objectives at home. Ninety-two percent of the parents indicated they signed and received a copy of the IEP and 76% were satisfied with their child's program.

Goldstein (1980) and Yoshida (1978) cited in earlier studies reported that the role of the parent as monitor or gatekeeper as opposed to decision making partner is often

reinforced by the attitudes of school personnel concerning the appropriate roles of parents.

Featherstone (1980), an educator as well as parent of exceptional child has argued that many parents would like to be more involved in the education of their exceptional children but feel neglected or ignored by schools that provide few opportunities and little information on options for involvement.

Dunbar (1987) evaluated the ability of seven parents to learn parent and school personnel conferencing skills through a training workshop in Idaho. These skills included preconference preparation, communication and coping skills in dealing with difficult information. Dunbar also studied differences in untrained conferencing skills between teachers and parents. A single subject design for applied settings using a multiple baseline across subjects was the chosen methodology for this study. As a result of training, parents increased their conferencing skills in the three targeted areas. Without training, teachers had more conferencing skill knowledge than parents. Parent completed evaluations indicated that parents valued the content and format of the study workshop highly.

Brantlinger (1987) using the hypotheses-generating techniques of Glaser and Strauss (1967) interviewed low income parents to ascertain their knowledge of and feelings about the adequacy of schooling in general and special

education in particular. The 35 subjects selected came from 30 households and lived within the city limits of a western city with a population of about 50,000, and were in the attendance zones of two predominantly low income elementary schools. The parents studied described a total of 100 children averaging three to five per family. Thirty-six percent (36%) of the subjects (16 parents) had school aged children receiving special education services. Seventy-eight percent of the parents had positive feelings about special education. Parents had consented for special education placement, but it was found that the majority of them lacked the necessary information to make informed decisions.

Chinn (1979) reported that cultural differences may affect involvement between parents and school personnel. Chinn discusses several reasons for parents choosing noninvolvement such as mistrust, bad experiences with school personnel and lack of understanding of culturally different persons by school staff. Marion (1980) states:

Minority parent involvement with schools has not always been pleasant. Minority parents who participate do so with suspicion. They may view special education as a dumping ground for those unable to learn and for troublemakers. (p.46 in Shea & Bauer, 1985).

Lynch and Stein (1987) performed one of the few studies available on the perceptions of parents from the nondominant culture. They compared Hispanic parents satisfaction with and participation in their child's special education plan with African-American and Anglo-American families from earlier investigations (Lynch & Lewis, 1982; Lynch & Stein, 1982). Subjects were selected from a random sample of 213 families with Spanish surnames drawn using ethnic code rosters of children receiving special education services. Sixty-three of the 213 families were interviewed using a 64 item questionnaire.

Eighty-five percent (85%) of the Hispanic parents were generally satisfied with their child's special education program, but were often unaware of the services provided in school. Seventy-five (75%) indicated that they were contacted by the district prior to the assessment; understood the assessment, their rights, the goals and objectives on their child's IEP; and received a copy of the IEP. However, parents tended not to be active participants. forty-five percent (45%) indicated that they were a part of the assessment process and 50% felt that they were not active participants in the development of the IEP. Thirty-four percent (34%) indicated that they had offered suggestions during the IEP meeting and less than half felt that they and the teacher could work together on goals and

objectives. Reasons cited for not attending meetings were: work, time conflicts, transportation and child care needs.

In a comparison of findings across ethnic groups the following was found:

1. Hispanics were significantly more positive than Anglo-Americans and African-Americans regarding the schools identification of their child's special needs. However, no differences between African-Americans and Anglo-Americans were found.
2. Hispanic parents felt that they were significantly less involved in the assessment process than did Anglos but not significantly less involved than African Americans.
3. Hispanic parents offered significantly fewer suggestions at the IEP conference than did Anglos but not significantly fewer than African Americans. Significant differences were found between African-Americans and Anglos with results showing African-Americans offering fewer suggestions than Anglos.
4. African-American and Hispanic parents knew significantly less about what services their child was to receive than Anglo parents.
5. In general, all three groups were positive about

the effectiveness of special education personnel. A significant difference was found between African-Americans and Hispanics rating of special education professionals. Hispanics were more likely to rate professionals as effective or very effective than were African-Americans.

The major limitations of the study included low rate of participation (which in itself is significant), impact of external events and voluntary nature of participation. The researchers recommended that school systems work to find ways of encouraging families from the nondominant culture to participate in the IEP process.

Summary

A review of related literature indicates that active parental involvement historically has been and continues to be a problem since the initiation of Public Law 94-142 and Massachusetts state law Chapter 766 despite their legal mandates.

Studies suggests that parents are rarely perceived and treated as equal participants. Instead, parents are expected by school personnel to supply information to the program planning team, but not to actively participate in the identification, assessment and placement process.

Parents are recognized as important members of the IEP team, but are not ranked as such in contribution or influence. Parents give or receive information, or have no involvement in the educational planning process. Special educators express diverse opinions regarding parent importance in participation in activities and development of the education plan.

It is questionable whether parents prefer as has been suggested by some researchers to maintain their passive status or have been regulated to such behaviors as a result of how school personnel communicate and respond to parents.

In general, studies indicate that a significant number of parents are satisfied with their child's special education

program and express a desire to work with school personnel despite having little knowledge to make informed decisions.

Recent research emphasizes the need for more options concerning involvement, teacher training programs, better home-school partnerships, preconferecing skills for parents, and inclusion of minority parents in the IEP decision making process.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The data for this study was collected using a parallel sample, cross sectional design. The parallel populations were: a) parents who have children in special education programs and b) special education teachers who have participated in the Individual Education Plan process. Data was analyzed by first summarizing the responses of each group and second, comparing the responses of the two groups on perceptions of parent involvement in the areas of participation, decision making and communication.

This chapter describes the location, sample population, survey instrument, materials, design, procedures and data analysis

Subjects

This study was conducted in the Boston Public School System. At the time of the study , the Boston Public School System had an enrollment of 55, 186 students. There were 120 public schools (17 high school, 22 middle school, 76 elementary school, 2 Early Learning Centers and 3 specialized schools). The

school system was divided into three zones (north, east and west). There were 12,927 students receiving special education services within the program prototypes at the initiation of this research project.

The subjects of this study were 33 special needs teachers and 106 parents of special needs students in three schools in the Boston Public School System. The three schools selected were the William Trotter Elementary School, Mary E. Curley Middle School and Dorchester High School. These schools were selected based on: 1) high incidence of special needs students, 2) range of disabilities across prototypes/programs, 3) racial composition of students receiving special services and 4) racial composition of teaching staff. The population was tricultural, being primarily composed of African-American, Hispanic and Anglo-American parents and teachers.

Sampling Procedure

Special education teachers were selected from the special education administrator's (called Evaluation Team Leader) list of special needs personnel in each school. Parent subjects were selected from an Alpha list of special needs students based on BPS program/prototype codes in each school. All parents and teachers listed were given the opportunity to participate in the

study. Forty teacher questionnaires and 463 parent questionnaires were sent to potential subjects.

There were three major problems that affected soliciting subjects. These problems were confined to the high school. They were: 1) Inaccuracy of Alpha sheet containing information on addresses, phone numbers and special education status contributing to 27 questionnaires returned postmarked, "attempted not known "2) One subject lived in a foster home, but was no longer living in the house and 3) Three parents contacted the researcher and indicated that their child had dropped out of school.

Questionnaires were completed by 33 teachers and 113 parents. Seven parent questionnaires could not be used in the study due to the high number of incomplete responses. All 33 teacher subjects agreed to a short one question follow up interview.

Instrumentation

The study was conducted through teacher and parent questionnaires and a follow up interview question. The parent and teacher interview was based on questionnaires developed by Nancy S. Horner in her research dissertation entitled, "Parent Involvement in Special Education." Permission from Dr.

Horner was granted prior to the initiation of this research project (See Appendix A). The purpose of these instruments was to ascertain special education teachers and parents current and preferred level of involvement in the areas of communication, decision making and participation as well as satisfaction with school efforts to facilitate parent involvement. This section describes the questionnaire instrument. It includes a summary of the development of the questionnaires.

Development of Questionnaires

The questions for the questionnaires were developed based on theoretical and historical rationales for the IEP process, previous questionnaires on parent involvement (Brooks, 1984; Horner, 1986; and Cone, Wolf & Delawyer, 1984), personal experiences, discussions with school personnel and parent conferences.

Description of Questionnaires

Questions for teachers and parents were designed to parallel each other as closely as possible. Both questionnaires contained 36 items. Items 1-12 consisted of questions of general information to obtain an accurate description of the

participants. Items 13-36 consisted of questions designed to ascertain information on current and preferred levels of involvement in the areas of communication, decision making, participation and satisfaction with school programs.

Questionnaires were printed in English and Spanish to accomodate parents whose primary language was Spanish. This was done to reduce language as a barrier to participation in the project.

Materials and Apparatus

A mechanical recording device (tape recorder) was used as an objective and efficient instrument to record teacher interviews. Teacher interviews were taped to: 1) minimize the distractions of writing; 2) provide an accurate system of recall and data collection; and 3) obtain information in an expedient manner.

Design

The data for this study was collected through two questionnaires using a parallel sample, cross-sectional design. The parallel populations were: 1) parents who have children enrolled in special education programs and 2) special education

teachers who have participated in the IEP process. Variables considered were race, age, parent income, teacher length of employment and experience, parent marital status, school location and parent educational level.

Scoring

The questionnaires required participants to mark a check (✓) in a blank or box except questions 16 and 21. For questions 16 and 21 space was provided to write comments. All marks except items 1-14 were assigned a numerical value. Items 1-14 were not assigned a numerical value because they provided demographic information.

Item 17 assessed frequency of communication. A rating system was used to determine usual and preferred frequency of communication between school and home. Participants were provided with five choices (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and yearly). Choices were rated 1 through 5. Each was assigned a point value ranging from 1-5 (based on the same sequence listed above). Thus, a lower rating indicated more frequent communication.

Item 18 listed five types of communication for current and preferred method of communication (phone calls, written notes, conference by appointment, informal in person and other). This item was scored similar to item 17. After all

questionnaire responses were tallied, responses were ranked in order from highest to lowest number of responses. This system provided current and preferred methods of communication .

Item 19 required participants to rate overall parent involvement (not involved, fairly involved and extremely involved) in the child's special education program. A tallying and ranking system was used to present results. Numerical values of 1 for not involved, 2 for fairly involved and 3 for extremely involved were given for each response.

A similar method was used in item 20 which assessed parent and teacher satisfaction with current level of parent involvement. Participants were provided with three choices (satisfied, desire more involvement, desire less involvement).

Items that were not responded to by participants in each of the questions described above were assigned a numerical value of 9.

Item 22 asked whether parents understood the special education process and Chapter 766 law. Participants were required to check (✓) yes or no. A simple tallying and ranking system was used to present results.

Items 23-28 assessed parents' current and preferred participation in various activities related to the child's special education. There were three choices under "current participation" and "preferred participation." These three

categories were never, sometimes, and frequently. A point system was used to score these items. A value of 1 was assigned to never, 2 to sometimes, and 3 to frequently. Current and preferred participation sections were scored as two separate items. There were 12 items for the entire section on current and preferred participation.

Items 29-36 addressed parent decision making in various activities related to the special education process. Participants were asked to respond to three choices (school decides, shared decision and parent decides) under "current role" and "preferred role." A numerical value was assigned to each response (school decides-1, shared decision-2, and parent decides-3). Current role and preferred role were considered two separate items. Thus, there was a total of 16 items. A sum for current role was obtained by totaling the responses from the 8 items. A similar system was used for "preferred role" in the decision making process.

Since participants were required to rate perceptions on a score of 1-3 (and weighted score of 1, 4 and 9), responses on individual items or group comparisons ranged from 1-3, thus means in the 0-1 range coincided with never, 1-2 sometimes and 2-3 frequently. The same logic was used in items 29-36, school decides 0-1, shared decision 1-2, and parent decides 2-3. Statistical analysis, observation of response patterns and

analysis of standard deviations were used to validate findings from the scores.

Procedures

It was required that anyone interested in conducting research in the Boston Public Schools first obtain written permission from the the Boston Public School's Office of Research and Development. After permission was secured from the Office of Research and Development (Appendix B), permission was obtained from zone superintendents and principals at each school involved in the study.

A pretest was conducted using two subjects from each group. Questions that were unclear, did not solicit the desired information, or produced negative reactions in subjects were revised or omitted. The pretest also determined whether data could be quantified and analyzed in the intended manner. The pretest took place one week before the actual study.

A list of special education teachers in each of the targeted schools was provided by the evaluation team leader. Teachers in all three schools were contacted via an in-person visit to set up a short conference at their convenience. The study was explained to all special education teachers. All teachers who agreed to participate in the study were mailed letters

describing the study. Questionnaires were attached to letters (Appendix C). A teacher in each school was designated to hold questionnaires until they could be collected by the researcher.

Parent questionnaires (Appendix D) were sent to all parents listed on each school's special education Alpha list of special need students. As mentioned earlier, accuracy of student information (i.e. address, phone number, enrollment status) was a major problem. To combat this, teachers were asked to provide the researcher with a count of students enrolled in their class and primary language. Questionnaires were given to these students and they were instructed to return questionnaires to school. This method proved successful. A memo from each school involved in the study accompanied the questionnaire explaining the study and asking parents for their participation.

Each questionnaire and corresponding teacher or parent was assigned a number for tracking and confidentiality purposes. Parents and teachers were instructed not to write their names or the names of family members on the questionnaire.

Participants were given two weeks to complete the 36 item questionnaire. At the end of the two weeks, a follow up call or letter was made to parents. Those agreeing to participate

in the study were encouraged to return their questionnaire or another one would be mailed to them via U.S. mail.

Teacher participants were contacted after all questionnaires were collected. They were asked to respond to an interview question regarding their particular school's parent involvement monitoring practices. All teachers who returned questionnaires agreed to the interview. Interviews were conducted in-person using a tape recorder at the convenience of the teacher.

Data Analysis

All data received through special education teacher and parent questionnaires and follow up interview were reviewed and analyzed. Data from each group was transcribed and placed on a computer disc. Data was analyzed through two methods: 1) a detailed written comparative analysis and description of teacher and parent responses; and 2) statistical analysis using a t-test to compare responses based on formulated hypotheses. The level of confidence selected was .05 to determine whether there was a significant difference between the means. The null hypothesis was $H_0: M_1 = M_2$ and the alternative hypothesis was $H_1: M_1 \neq M_2$. The levels of significance (p values) were

calculated with the usual t - statistic. Due to the large degrees of freedom for the parent population ($n + m - 2 = 137$), a standard normal table was referenced. Appendix E presents a sample of the statistical procedures used to analyze data. Responses were also compared with existing special education laws, primarily those delineated in Public law 94-142 and Massachusetts state law Chapter 766.

Responses were received from 33 special education teachers and 113 parents for a total of 146 respondents. Seven of the parent questions were not used due to the high number of unanswered questions. Thus, there were 139 respondent questionnaires analyzed in the study. Table 1 provides a description of the study participants and rate of return for questionnaires.

TABLE 1. Study Participants

Subjects	Original Sample	<u>n</u>	Rate of Return
Special Education Teachers	40	33	82.5
Parents	<u>463</u>	<u>113</u>	<u>24.4</u>
Total	503	146	29.0

Table 2 provides a summary of demographic data from special education teachers. The predominant special education teacher respondents were white females certified in moderate special needs. The majority (24.2%) listed their age range as 26-30 years with 41- 45 (21.2%) years old being the second highest choice.

TABLE 2 Demographic Profile of Special Education Teachers

Demographic	Absolute Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Sex		
Male	8	24.2
Female	25	75.8
Age		
22-25	1	3.0
26-30	8	24.2
31-35	1	3.0
36-40	6	18.2
41-45	7	21.2
46-50	3	9.1
51-55	3	9.1
56-60	2	6.1
Over 60	0	0
No Response	2	6.1

Continued on next page

TABLE 2. (Continued)

Demographic	Absolute Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Race		
African American	9	27.3
Caucasian	17	51.5
Latino	6	18.2
Asian	0	0
Other	0	0
No Response	1	3.0
Education		
B.A	7	21.2
B.A. + 15	5	15.2
B.A. + 30	5	15.2
M.A.	0	0
M.A. + 30	7	21.2
M.A. + 45	6	8.2
Years Taught		
0-2	4	2.1
3-5	6	18.1
6-10	5	5.2
10-15	8	24.3
Over 15	10	30.3
Years Worked in Special Education		
0-2	4	12.1
3-5	6	18.1
6-10	5	15.2
11-15	8	24.3
Over 15	10	30.3

Continued on next page

TABLE 2. (Continued)

Demographic	Absolute Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Teaching Endorsement or certificate		
Regular Education	1	3.0
No Teaching Certificate	5	15.1
Moderate Special Needs	22	66.7
Early Childhood Special Needs	0	0
Bilingual Education	2	6.1
Severe Special Needs	0	0
Speech/Language	2	6.1
Other (MSW)	1	3.0
Age Group		
3 - 5	3	9.1
Elementary	4	12.1
Middle	12	36.4
High School	14	42.4
Major Assignment		
Special Education-Resource	12	36.4
Special Education-Itinerant	2	6.0
Special Education		
Self-Contained	18	54.5
Other	1	3.0
Prototype of Most Students		
502.1	1	3.0
502.2	1	3.0
502.3	10	30.3
502.4	22	66.7

Continued on next page

TABLE 2. (Continued)

Demographic	Absolute Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Handicapping Condition of Most Students		
Autistic	0	0
Deaf	0	0
Blind	0	0
Emotionally Disturbed	9	27.3
Learning Disabled	16	48.5
Visually Impaired	0	0
Mentally Retarded	4	12.1
Orthopedically Impaired	0	0
Other/Health Impaired	0	0
Primary Language Spoken		
English	27	81.8
Spanish	2	6.1
Both	41	2.1

Table 3 summarizes the demographic data from parents who elected to participate in the study. The majority of parents participating in the study were African-American females age 26-40 years old. They were single parents and high school educated. Each held a full-time job, was the natural parent and had three children in the household. The average parent had one (1) child receiving special education services usually in a

self-contained classroom. According to the majority of parents, the label most often used to describe their child was learning disabled.

TABLE 3. Demographic Profile of Parents

Demographic	Absolute Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Age		
Under 18	0	0
18-25	1.9	
26-40	78	73.6
41-55	22	20.8
Over 55	5	4.7
Household		
Single	56	52.9
Two Parent	50	47.1
Race		
African American	53	50
Caucasian	17	16
Latino	29	27.4
Asian	21	.9
Other	5	4.7
Relationship to Child		
Mother	94	88.9
Father	6	5.6
Guardian	4	3.8
Other (grandmother)	2	1.9

Continued on next page

TABLE 3. (Continued)

Demographic	Absolute Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Family Income		
Less than \$10,000	43	40.5
\$10,000-\$15,000	22	20.7
\$15,000-\$22,000	25	23.6
\$22,000-\$30,000	6	5.7
\$30,000-\$50,000	6	5.7
Over \$50,000	4	3.8
Highest Level of Education		
Middle School or less	12	11.3
High School	71	67.0
College	23	21.7
Distance Live From School		
Less than 1 mile	27	25.5
2-4 Miles	67	63.2
More than 5 Miles	12	11.3
Total Number of Children per Household		
One	7	6.6
Two	16	15.1
Three	43	40.6
Four	23	21.7
Five	13	12.3
Six	4	3.8

Continued on next page

TABLE 3. (Continued)

Demographic	Absolute Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Number of Children Receiving Special Education Services		
One	75	70.8
Two	24	22.6
Three	6	5.7
Four	1	.9
Special Needs Child's Age		
1-2	0	0
3-5	3	2.7
6-8	31	27.7
9-12	20	17.8
13-16	36	32.1
17-21	20	17.9
Over 21	2	1.8
Labels Given To Their Child		
Autistic	0	0
Deaf	1	.9
Blind	0	0
Emotionally Disturbed	10	9.4
Learning Disabled	51	48.1
Speech/Language Impaired	27	25.5
Mentally Retarded	4	3.8
Visually Handicapped	0	0
Orthopedically Impaired	0	0
Other (Attention Deficit & Hearing Impaired)	13	12.3

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA AND RESULTS

This study was conducted to ascertain parents' and school teachers' perceptions of involvement in the special education process. Questionnaires and follow up teacher interview were used to gather data.

After interviews were completed, the examiner transcribed responses. Data was analyzed and described through a discussion based on major and minor hypotheses. The responses of the two groups were compared to existing laws and school system practices and procedures. Data collected outside of the established hypotheses relevant to the study are presented in this section of the dissertation.

Results are presented based on the major and minor hypotheses developed on parents' and special education teachers' current and preferred involvement in activities and decision making:

- 1) A description of the differences between special education teachers' and parents' perceptions of current involvement opportunities.
- 2) A description of differences between special education

teachers' and parents' perceptions of preferred parent involvement opportunities.

- 3) A description of differences between the perceptions of parents on current and preferred parent involvement opportunities
- 4) A description of differences between perceptions of special education teachers on preferred parent involvement opportunities.
- 5) A description of the differences between the perceptions of parents' and special education teachers' current and preferred parent involvement opportunities.
- 6) A description of differences between current and preferred level of involvement for parents from the non-dominant culture and Caucasian parents.
- 7) A description of differences between preferred level of involvement for parents living within the community (less than 1 mile) and those living outside the school community.
- 8) A description of differences between preferred level of involvement for single parent households versus two parent households.

- 9) A description of differences between preferred level of involvement for college educated parents and those without college educations.
- 10) A description of differences between preferred level of involvement for high income parents and low income parents.

The results of five major hypotheses and five minor hypotheses are presented below:

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 states, there is no significant difference between parents' and special education teachers' perceptions of current involvement opportunities.

There was not a significant difference between special education teachers' and parents' perceptions of current parent involvement in activities (See Table 4). Both groups indicated current participation in the six activities as sometimes. Parents perceived themselves as slightly more involved than teachers perceived parents involved in the six activities, but differences were not significant except on the item regarding helping to write the educational plan. Parents indicated a significantly higher rate of participation than teachers rated

parents. Parent responses were indicated as sometimes, while teacher responses fell within the never range (See Table 5).

There was a significant difference between teachers' and parents' perceptions of involvement in decision making activities (See Table 6). Parents tended to view decision making as more shared than school teachers who indicated that the school decides. Results were formulated based on a t-test comparing teacher and parent responses.

Significant differences in decision making were found in the initial identification of a child having special needs, mainstreaming decisions, school discipline and monitoring activities.

TABLE 4. Sums of Current Parent Involvement Opportunities

Description	Mean	Standard Deviation	*Significance
Activities			
Parents	1.69	.66	
Sped Teachers	1.60	.63	.0910
Decision Making			
Parents	1.38	.52	
Sped Teachers	.99	.67	.0000

*p value

TABLE 5 Significant Differences Between Parents' and Special Education Teachers' Perceptions of Current Involvement in Activities

Decision by Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	Significance
Attend IEP Conference			
Parents	1.76	0.42	
Teachers	1.96	1.01	.1010
Help Write Educational Plan			
Parents	1.41	0.7	
Teachers	1.15	0.36	.0404
Visit Classroom			
Parents	1.77	0.75	
Teachers	1.57	0.50	.1528
Participate in Class Activities and Field Trips			
Parents	1.45	0.60	
Teachers	1.24	0.60	.0784
Attend parent Meetings			
Parents	1.81	0.59	
Teachers	1.84	0.46	.7872
Talk/Write to teacher			
Parents	1.86	0.67	
Teachers.	1.90	0.64	.7642

TABLE 6. Significant Difference in Current Role in Decision Making

Decision by Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	Significance
Initial Identification of Child As Having Special Need			
Parents	1.51	0.64	
Teachers	1.54	0.44	.8026
Evaluation of a Child's Abilities			
Parents	1.40	0.51	
Teachers	1.21	0.41	.0512
Class Placement			
Parents	1.58	0.55	
Teachers	1.33	0.48	.0188
Writing Educational Plan Goal and Objectives			
Parents	1.33	0.44	
Teachers	1.15	0.36	.0300
Monitoring a Child's Progress on IEP Goals and Objectives			
Parents	1.49	0.47	
Teachers	1.03	0.69	.0000
Mainstreaming a Child with Less or Non-Special Needs Peers			
Parents	1.33	0.76	
Teachers	1.27	0.44	.6672

Continued on next page

TABLE 6. (continued)

Decision by Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	Significance
School Discipline			
Parents	1.29	0.53	
Teachers	1.12	0.33	.0818
Curriculum Used in Class			
Parents	1.10	0.47	
Teachers	1.00	0.3	.2502

There was no significant difference between teachers' and parents' perceptions of current frequency of communication. The mean rating for parents and teachers was 3.32 and 3.39. The current frequency of communication between home and school was quarterly for parents and monthly for teachers. Table 7 presents a summary of parents and special education teachers ratings of frequency of communication.

TABLE 7. Current Frequency of Communication for Parents and Special Education Teachers

Preference by Group	Frequency	Absolute Frequency	Rating
Parents			
Daily	4	3.8	4
Weekly	16	15.1	3
Monthly	31	29.2	2
Quarterly	52	49.1	1
Yearly	3	2.8	5
Mean: 3.32			
Standard Deviation: 0.9			
Teachers			
Daily	2	6.1	4
Weekly	9	3.0	3
Monthly	13	39.4	1
Quarterly	12	36.4	2
Yearly	1	3.0	5
Mean: 3.39			
Standard Deviation: 0.46			
Significance between two groups (p value): .6672			

There was no significant difference found in parent and teacher rating of current types of communication. Both group indicated phone calls as the major means of communication

between home and school. Table 8 summarizes the ratings of both groups.

TABLE 8. Ranked Order for Current Types of Communication

Preference by Group	Frequency
Parents	
Phone Call	107
Conference by Appointment	62
Informal In-person	46
Written Notes	27
Teachers	
Phone Call	27
Written Notes	21
Conference by Appointment	20
Informal In-person	6

There was a significant difference in current level of satisfaction between parents and special education teachers. Forty-eight (45.3%) out of 106 parents indicated satisfaction with their current level of involvement. Fifty-seven (53.8%) parents indicated a desire for more involvement and 1 (.9%) indicated a desire for less involvement. In contrast, only two teachers (6.1%) out of the 33 teachers sampled were satisfied

with parents' current level of involvement in activities and decision-making (See Table 9)

Table 9. Significant Differences Between Parent's and Special Education Teachers' Current Level of Satisfaction

Responses	Satisfied	Desire More Involvement	Desire Less Involvement
Parents	48	57	1
Mean: 1.55			
Standard Deviation: 0.52			
Teachers	2	31	-
Mean: 1.93			
Standard Deviation: 0.3			
Significance between two groups (p value): .0001			

There was a significant difference between parents' and special education teachers' overall rating of parent involvement in activities. In general, parents perceived themselves as significantly more involved than the teachers' perceptions of involvement in activities and decision making.

It was interesting to find that 24.5% of parents surveyed rated themselves as extremely involved while none of the teachers rated parents as extremely involved. Table 10

provides a summary of parents' and special education teachers' rating of parent involvement.

TABLE 10. Overall Rating of Parent Involvement in the Special Education Process

Description	Absolute Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Parents		
Not Involved	5	4.7
Fairly Involved	75	70.8
Extremely Involved	26	24.5
Mean: 2.19		
Standard Deviation: 0.84		
Teachers		
Not Involved	13	9.1
Fairly Involved	20	90.9
Mean: 1.60		
Standard Deviation: 0.5		
Significance between two groups (p value): .0156		

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 states, there is no significant difference between school teachers' and parents' perceptions of preferred involvement opportunities.

There was no significant difference between parents' and special education teachers' perceptions of preferred involvement in activities. Parents rated their preferred level of involvement as sometimes (1.58) while teachers preferred level of parent involvement was rated as frequently (2.64). There was no significant difference in the preferred level of involvement between parents and teachers in decision making (Table 11). Both groups indicated a preference for shared decision making. The mean for parents was 1.83. The mean for teachers was 1.85. Table 12 provides sums for individual items related to decision making.

TABLE 11. Sums of Preferred Parent Involvement Opportunities

Description	Mean	Standard Deviation	Significance
Activities			
Parents	1.58	1.04	
Teachers	2.64	.67	.0000
Decision-Making			
Parents	1.83	.45	
Teachers	1.85	.34	.5028

TABLE 12. Significant Differences in Preferred Role in
Decision Making -Item by Item Analysis

Preferred Role by Group	Mean	Deviation	Significance
Initial Identification of child as having special needs			
Parents	1.82	0.56	.0394
Teachers	2.03	0.3	
Evaluation of child's Abilities			
Parents	1.85	0.53	.6100
Teachers	1.90	0.33	
Class Placement			
Parents	1.94	0.37	.3734
Teachers	1.87	0.47	
Writing IEP Goals and Objectives			
Parents	1.82	0.64	.6744
Teacher	1.87	0.42	
Monitoring Child's Progress			
Parents	1.92	0.38	.0014
Teachers	1.66	0.5	
Mainstreaming Child With Less or Non-Special Needs Peers			
Parents	1.83	0.46	.9282
Teachers	1.84	0.76	

Continued on next page

TABLE 12. (continued)

Preferred Role by Group	Mean	Deviation	Significance
School Discipline			
Parents	1.82	0.8	
Teachers	1.72	0.9	.5486
Curriculum Used in Class			
Parents	1.67	0.5	
Teachers	1.51	0.50	.1096

There was not a significant difference between parents' and special education teachers' perceptions of preferred frequency of communication. The mean rating of communication for parents and teachers was 2.59 and 3.21 (See Table 13). The preferred frequency of communication between home and school was monthly for parents and teachers. In general, teachers preferred more communication than parents.

TABLE 13. Preferred Frequency of Communication

Preference by Group	Frequency
<hr/>	
Parents	
Daily	7
Weekly	31
Monthly	62
Quarterly	5
Yearly	0
Special Education Teachers	
Daily	2
Weekly	12
Monthly	17
Quarterly	6
Yearly	1
Mean	
Parents:	2.59
Teachers:	3.21
Standard Deviation	
Parents:	2.38
Teachers:	0.7
Significance between groups:	.1416

Significant differences were found in parent and teacher rating of preferences for type of communication preferred (See Table 14). Parents indicated written notes as the major preference in communication between home and school. Teachers preferred conferences by appointment as their major form of communication with parents.

TABLE 14 Ranked Order for Preferred Type of Communication

Preference by Group	Frequency
Parents	
Written notes	62
Phone calls	58
Informal in-person	46
Conference by appointment	3
Teachers	
Conference by appointment	27
Phone calls	23
Informal in-person	18
Written notes	14

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 states, there is no significant difference between parents' perceptions of current and preferred parent involvement opportunities.

There was a significant difference between the means of the summed responses for current and preferred involvement in activities and decision making. Table 15 provides a summary of the differences between the means of the summed scores. Mean scores were higher for preferred involvement in activities and decision making than current involvement in these two areas. Parents indicated current involvement in activities as never to sometimes, while preferring involvement as sometimes. Current decision making was indicated as school decides, but parents in the three school indicated a preference for shared decision making.

TABLE 15. Comparison of Significant Differences Between Current and Preferred Involvement Opportunities Between Parents

Involvement Opportunity by Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	Significance
Activities			
Current	1.69	.66	
Preferred	1.58	1.04	.0244
Decision Making			
Current	1.38	.52	
Preferred	1.83	.45	.0000

The majority of parents in each of the three schools indicated a desire for participation sometimes in activities. There were differences in 3 out of 6 items under current participation. Elementary and middle school parents indicated participation as sometimes in IEP attendance, while high school parents indicated never as its majority response to this item. Elementary and high school parents indicated sometimes under the item visit classroom, while middle school parents indicated never as the majority response. On the item assessing parent participation in classroom activities and field trips, elementary and high school parents indicated never, while middle school parents indicated sometimes as their majority response. The

majority of parents in the three schools checked sometimes as their current involvement on two items (attend parent meetings and talk/write to teachers), and never on the item regarding helping to write the educational plan.

There were differences in 4 out of the 8 items under current involvement in decision making. Elementary school parents indicated shared decision making for the item regarding initial identification of the child as having special needs, while middle and high school parents indicated that the school decides. Similar findings were revealed for the item regarding evaluation of the child's abilities. Elementary and high school parents indicated school decides for the item regarding class placement, while middle school parents indicated shared decision making for this item. Similar findings were revealed on the item regarding monitoring the child's progress on educational plan goals and objectives. The majority of parents indicated that the school decides for the other four items (writing educational plans, mainstreaming opportunities, school discipline and curriculum used in class).

There were differences found within the three parent groups in preferred involvement in decision making. The majority of parents in each of the three school indicated a desire for shared decision making in all eight areas.

Results suggests parent desire for a greater role in participation in various activities related to the special education process and greater role in decision making.

There was a significant difference between parents' current and preferred frequency of communication (See Table 16). The average frequency of current communication (3.36) was quarterly, while the preferred frequency of communication (2.59) was monthly.

TABLE 16. Significant Differences Between Current and Preferred Frequency of Communication by Parents

Frequency of Communication	Mean	Standard Deviation	Significance
Current	3.36	0.94	.0000
Preferred	2.59	0.7	.0000

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 states, there is no significant difference between special education teachers' perceptions of current and preferred parent involvement in opportunities.

There were significant differences between special education teachers' perceptions of current and preferred roles in participation in special education activities and decision making. Overall, teachers indicated that parents currently participate in activities sometimes, but would prefer that they participate frequently. Teachers indicated that in terms of decision making, the school decides. Special education teachers indicated that they would prefer shared decision making.

An item by item analysis on teachers' perceptions between current and preferred parent involvement in activities and decision making revealed differences on the item regarding class visits. Elementary and middle school teachers indicated parents sometimes visit the school, while high school parents never visit the school. Differences were also found on the item regarding participation in class activities and field trips. Elementary teachers indicated that parents sometimes participate, while middle and high school teachers indicated that parents never participate in classroom activities and trips. The only difference in preferred involvement in activities was on the item regarding writing the educational plan. Elementary and high school teachers indicated that they preferred parents to help frequently, while middle school teachers indicated help on a sometimes basis.

An item by item analysis between current and preferred decision making revealed equal scores between school decides and shared decision making on the item regarding current mainstreaming opportunities. Teachers indicated that the school decides for all other items under current opportunities for decision making. On preferred opportunities in decision making, there was only one item that did not have similar responses. Elementary and high school teachers indicated a preference for shared decision making in curriculum used in class, while middle school teachers indicated that the school decides.

In summary, teachers indicated that they prefer more participation from parents than at present. They also indicated a preference for more parent decision making than at present. Results of summed scores for teachers can be found in Table 17.

TABLE 17. Significant Differences Between Special Education Teachers' Perceptions of Current and Preferred Parent Involvement Opportunities

Description	Mean	Standard Deviation	Significance
Activities			
Current	1.60	.63	
Preferred	2.64	.67	.0000
Decision making			
Current	.99	.67	
Preferred	1.85	.34	.0000

There was a significant difference between current and preferred type of communication for special education teachers. Teachers currently use the phone as the primary means of communication, but indicated a preference for conferences by appointment as the major means of communication with parents.

Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 states, there is no significant difference between the perceptions of parents and special education

teachers on current and preferred parent involvement activities.

There was a significant difference between parents and special education teachers on current and preferred involvement in activities and decision making. This conclusion was reached based on the data analyzed in Hypotheses one and two (See Tables 4 and 9). A test of significance for these scores revealed a significant difference between summed scores.

Minor Hypothesis 1

Minor Hypothesis 1 states, there is no significant difference preferred level of involvement for parents from the non-dominant culture (African-Americans, Latinos, Asians and those who indicated "Other" on the questionnaire) and Caucasian parents.

There were significant differences for preferred level of involvement in activities between minority parents and those of the dominant culture. Responses between the two groups were compared using a t-test.

Parents from the dominant culture indicated a higher frequency of participation in special education activities than parents from the non-dominant culture. There was no

significant difference between the two groups in preferred role in decision making. Both groups indicated a preference for more shared decision making. Results are summarized in Table 18.

TABLE 18. Sums of Preferred Parent Involvement Opportunities between Minority and Caucasian Parents

Involvement Opportunity by Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	Significance
<u>Activities</u>			
Minority Parents	1.82.	.95	
Caucasian Parents	2.35	.83	.0000
<u>Decision Making</u>			
Minority Parents	1.80	.80	
Caucasian Parents	1.86	.55	.4010

Minor Hypothesis 2

Minor Hypothesis 2 states, there is no significant difference between preferred level of involvement for parents living within the community and those living outside the school community.

There was no significant difference in preferred level of involvement between parents living within the community (less than mile) and those living outside of the community. Twenty seven parents indicated that they lived less than 1 mile, 67 indicated that they live 2 to 4 miles, and 12 parents indicated that they live more than 5 miles from their child's school. Ninety percent (90%) of the parents surveyed indicated that school distance did not affect their participation in school activities. While the majority of parents indicated that distance does not affect participation, it was one of the reasons cited by parents when questioned about barriers preventing them from being more involved in school activities on another survey question item.

Minor Hypothesis 3

Minor Hypothesis 3 states, there is no significant difference between preferred level of involvement between single parent households and two parent household. There were no significant differences found in the preferred level of involvement between single and two parent households.

Minor Hypothesis 4

Minor Hypothesis 4 states, there is no significant difference in preferred parent involvement opportunities for college educated parents and those without college educations.

There was a significant difference between parents with college degrees and parents with a high school diploma or less in preferred opportunities for involvement in activities and decision making. Based on results using a t-test (See Table 19), college educated parents preferred a greater role in shared decision making with the school and indicated a preference for involvement in activities leaning towards sometimes to frequently and shared decision making, while high school educated parents indicated preferred participation in activities as strictly sometimes and decision making as borderline school decides to shared decision making. It is a positive sign that both groups indicated a desire to move in the direction towards increased shared decision making.

TABLE 19. Significant Differences in Preferred Opportunities Based on Parent Level of Education

Level of Education	Mean	Standard Deviation	Significance
Activities			
College	2.33	.76	.0038
High School	2.14	.23	
Decision making			
College	2.03	.63	.0000
High School	1.74	.51	

Minor Hypothesis 5

Minor hypothesis 5 states, there is no significant difference in current and preferred parent involvement opportunities between parents with low incomes and parents with high incomes.

There was a disproportionate number of parents who were classified as low income (under \$22,000) to high income. Eighty-eight (83%) parents fell within the low income range, while 18 (17%) parents were classified as in the high income range with salaries over \$22,000. Based on responses between the two groups on scores obtained from current and preferred opportunities for involvement and items assessing decision-making, there were no significant differences in parent

involvement opportunities and decision making between the two groups

Additional Survey Questions Discussion

Item 14: Does existing school policy encourage or discourage active parent participation in the special education process?

In general teachers indicated that existing school policies encourage active participation in the special education process. Twenty-two (66.7%) indicated that existing policies and procedures encourage participation, six (18.2%) indicated that it discourages active participation, and five (15.1%) indicated that it neither encourages or discourages active participation.

Item 15: How would you rate the fairness of the school in terms of appropriate placement and services?

The majority of teachers gave their school a favorable rating regarding fairness in placement and services. Twenty-eight (85%) teachers rated their school as fair, while five (15%) rated their school as unfair in its practices. It should be noted

that unfair ratings were equitably distributed between the three schools and not limited to one particular school.

Item 16: What can the school do to better serve special needs children and their parents?

Parent response to this question varied according to grade level. Responses were ranked in priority based on occurrence in the number of questionnaires. Responses were as follows: 1) Provide after school programs for special needs children; 2) Provide more consistency in special education programming; 3) Keep parents more informed of their child's progress or problems; 4) Provide more in-school activities for special needs students; 5) Provide more homework for students; 6) Provide transportation to meetings; 7) Provide students with more information on drug awareness; and 8) Provide special needs students with more information on careers and job possibilities.

Item 21: What (if anything) prevents you from being more involved in your child's special education?

The barriers listed by parents were work schedule, school distance and household commitment which parents described as taking care of the house and other children in the family. The majority of teachers when asked this question responded with similar responses and offered other possible barriers for parents.

Teacher responses were as follows:

- 1) Parent might have difficulty finding a baby-sitter.
- 2) Lack of transportation.
- 3) Parents are "burnt out" especially by high school age.
- 4) Conflict between parent and school.
- 5) Parents lack motivation or interest.
- 6) Parents lack an understanding of their child's problem.
- 7) Parents feel guilty about their child's problem and don't want to face school personnel.
- 8) Lack of knowledge of special education laws.
- 9) Work schedule conflicts with school schedule.
- 10) Parents are afraid of the school setting.

11) Parents feel that it is the school's responsibility.

Item 22: Do parents understand the special education process and Chapter 766 law?

The results of this survey item were surprising. Sixty (56.6%) out of the 106 parents participating in the study stated that they understood their rights and the rights of their child under Massachusetts state law Chapter 766. The fact that nearly half of the parents questioned did not know Chapter 766 law indicates that while gains may have been made in parents' knowledge of special education law, schools must continue to increase efforts in informing parents of their rights and the rights of their special needs child.

Parent responses to this question differed sharply from special education teachers' opinion regarding parent knowledge of Chapter 766 laws. Twenty-eight (84.8%) out of the 33 teacher participating in the study indicated that they did not think parents understood the special education process.

Interview Question: How does the school monitor parent involvement?

Special education teachers in all three schools were interviewed separately using a tape recorder. Teachers, in

general, were unsure as to how their school monitors parent involvement in the special education process. There were not any uniformed, systematic means of assessing parent participation in school activities.

Teachers indicated that monitoring, for the most part, was performed on an individual basis. Teachers reported that they monitored parent involvement by logging class visits and phone discussions.

All teachers interviewed indicated that they thought their school had made strides in providing activities that encouraged better home-school relations. Teachers listed a variety of activities that the school sponsored to promote parent involvement. Activities discussed were: 1) school open house; 2) holiday dinners; 3) school social assemblies such as drama and choir performances; and 4) parent/teacher coffee hour. While teachers indicated that these were good activities, they voiced concern that these activities were geared toward the entire school and did not address the diverse needs of parents of special needs students.

It was suggested by several teachers that the school system hire personnel, preferably a parent, to function as a monitor. This person would assess parent involvement in the school, develop workshops to address the needs of parents of special needs children and provide ongoing support to parents.

Given the lack of a systematic means of assessing parent involvement based on teacher responses, it is unclear and uncertain specific monitoring practices at the administrative level other than the parent's signature of attendance on the educational plan and log of parent contact with the evaluation team leader.

CHAPTER V.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is divided into six sections. First, the purpose, problem and procedures are reviewed; second, major and minor findings are summarized based on the data analysis presented in Chapter 4; third, conclusions are formulated based on findings; fourth, recommendations are suggested based on the conclusions; fifth, study limitations are discussed; and sixth, suggestions are presented for future studies on parent involvement in special education.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to ascertain parents' and special education teachers' perceptions of parent involvement in special education on a number of variable related to communication, participation and decision making.

According to Massachusetts state law Chapter 766 and federal law Public Law 94-142, parents have the right to be actively involved in all decisions regarding their handicapped child; however, a review of past and current practices indicate that parent participation is typically passive, limited to giving

and receiving information relevant to their child, and in many cases, simply signing an Individualized Educational Plan with little knowledge of its content or impact on future services.

Two questionnaires, one for parents and one for teachers were distributed in three schools to ascertain parents' and school personnels' perceptions of parent involvement. The parent questionnaire was translated into Spanish for Spanish dominant parents to reduce language as a barrier in willingness to participate in the study. The questionnaire for parents consisted of 36 items ranging from a general description of participant and family to specific questions related to involvement in the special education process. The questionnaire for teachers consisted of 36 items ranging from a general description of participants to specific questions related to current and preferred level of parent involvement and efforts to facilitate involvement. Survey items were designed to parallel each other in the areas of communication, decision making and participation. A follow up, in-person interview question regarding school monitoring practices was presented to the teacher subjects.

Questionnaires were received from 33 teachers (82.5 %) and 113 parents (24.4%). Seven questionnaires were not used due to high incidence of unanswered questions, thus 106 questionnaires (22.8%) were used. Data collected from the

questionnaires was analyzed to determine whether: 1) there was a significant difference in perceptions of parent involvement between the two groups in the areas of communication, participation and decision-making; 2) there was a significant difference in perceptions between parents in the in the three targeted areas; and 3) there was a significant difference between special education teachers in their perceptions of parent involvement. Variables considered were parent income, educational level, distance from school, educational level, marital status, and cultural background. The questionnaire also yielded information on barriers that affect parent involvement from teacher and parent perspectives, monitoring practices, satisfaction with school programming and knowledge of special education laws.

Findings

Results of major and minor hypotheses are summarized as follows:

1. There was no significant difference between parents' and special education teachers' perceptions of current parent involvement in activities. There was a significant difference in current opportunities in decision making.

2. There was no significant difference between special education teachers' perceptions and parents' perceptions of preferred involvement opportunities.
3. There was a significant difference between parents on current and preferred opportunities for involvement.
4. There was a significant difference between special education teachers' regarding current and preferred opportunities for involvement.
5. There was a significant difference between parents and special education on current and preferred involvement in activities and decision making.
6. There was a significant difference in preferred level of involvement between minority parents and those of the dominant culture in activities, but not in decision making.
7. There was no significant difference in preferred level of involvement between parents living within the community and parents living outside the community.
8. There was no significant difference in preferred level of involvement between single parent households and two parent households.

9. There was a significant difference in preferred involvement for college educated parents and those without college educations.
10. There was no significant difference in preferred involvement for high income parents and low income parents.

Conclusions

The results of this study suggests that while parents and teachers acknowledge parent involvement as an area in need of addressing, there continues to be discrepancies between perceptions of parents and teachers. The study supports the three notions found in parent involvement literature: 1) parents seem generally satisfied with their child's special education program although they had little impact on the curriculum used in the school or writing the educational plan; 2) parents and school personnel prefer increased parent involvement in the three targeted areas of the study; and 3) parent involvement is typically passive in nature and perceived as such by school personnel.

The primary reasons given by parents and teachers for the parents' lack of involvement were work schedule and family obligations. These barriers are the same obstacles to parent involvement found in literature revealing the continued need for flexibility in school personnel attempts to involve parents, options for involvement, and improved collaboration between schools and businesses that employ parents. This supports the original contention that we need to view parent involvement as an interdependent part of a larger system.

Parent responses to questions related to knowledge of special education law were surprising to the researcher. The fact that nearly 44% of the parents questioned did not know Chapter 766 law indicates that while gains have been made in parents' knowledge of special education law, schools must continue to increase efforts aimed at informing parents of their rights and the rights of their special needs child. These results were consistent with research on parent involvement in which teachers stated that one of the barriers to meaningful parent involvement was lack of parent knowledge of the laws affecting their child. Teacher responses were consistent with research findings in the literature on teachers' perception of parent involvement. It was found that eighty-five percent of

the teachers involved in the study did not feel parents understood state and federal special education laws.

Based on parent responses to items related to school fairness in programming, placement and services, and satisfaction, it would appear that most parents are pleased with the special education services provided for their child. However, both groups indicated a desire for more involvement in the special education process. Teachers suggested various activities such as parent workshops, GED preparation, drug information sessions, career awareness workshops for students, parent outreach services, improved class size, more early intervention programs and teacher training activities to improve parent-school relations. Parents indicated a need for similar activities to facilitate better school-parent involvement. They also indicated a need for more after-school programs, home assignments, transportation availability to school activities and individual assistance to their child.

Parents in the three schools indicated a preference for participation in activities on a sometimes basis and preference for shared decision making. Teachers indicated a preference for parent participation in activities frequently and preference for shared decision making.

Parents at the elementary school were currently more involved in school activities and decision making than middle

and high school parents. They indicated shared decision making at a slightly higher rate than the high school parents which tended to allow the school to make the most of the decisions regarding their child. This phenomenon may be tied to the notions that: 1) parents of high school students may have reached a point where they feel they no longer need to actively participate in the process; and or, 2) students of age may actually be attending meetings and participating in decision making. Another possible reason is parents may have reached the conclusion that their involvement is one systematically set up for exclusion rather than inclusion.

Currently, the Boston Public School System is obligated by law to distribute progress reports to parents twice yearly. This may account for parent's stated frequency of communication as quarterly since a six month option was not available as a choice on the questionnaire. Teachers indicated current frequency of communication as monthly. Both groups indicated a preference for monthly frequency of communication. These findings signal a need for increased frequency of communication from the school to parents.

Parents and special education teachers indicated difference preferences for type of communication between home and school. Teachers indicated a preference for

conferences by appointment and parents indicated a desire for written notes.

While the three school selected were racially diverse, all three school had a large number of minorities; therefore, the researcher was able to gain the perspectives of African-American, Latino and Asian parents, a perspective that has not been frequently addressed in past studies.

The results of a comparison between Caucasian and minority parents indicate a significant difference in preferences of involvement in activities, but not in decision making.

It was disturbing to find the disproportionate number of Caucasian teachers to African American teachers especially at the high school level where minority students are faced with career decisions, adolescent issues, and self-image problems. The lack of minority teachers present may serve as an additional handicap in that students are not served by teachers who represent similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds, or who may not be particularly sensitive to the needs, learning styles and problems facing minority children. The impact of lack of minority special education teachers to parent participation in school special education activities is unclear, but is an area of curiosity and concern.

The interview question on school and system monitoring revealed that teachers were unsure of monitoring practices in their school other than logging phone calls and individual practices. The lack of a uniform system of monitoring parent involvement in special education in each school and systemwide is an area of concern. The suggestion to employ personnel to address parent involvement issues in schools appears to be a viable solution worth investigation by the school system.

In general, it would appear that great strides have been made in school personnel attempts to involve parents in the special education process evidenced by research findings and results of this study. This study revealed that parents are generally satisfied with their child's special education program, but still are not "active" or "equal" participants.

Recommendations

The results of this study support the notion that schools must reshape current procedures and develop better strategies and training resources to actively involve parents from various cultural, linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds. School systems must look beyond their schools and utilize community resources and organizations as tools to disseminate information

necessary for parents to actively participate in the special education decision making process

Strategies for School Personnel

School based and system wide strategies were developed based on the information provided by parents and teachers on the questionnaire and follow up interview question. Strategies were also developed as a result of pre-study and post-study observations. School personnel need to:

- 1) Involve parents in all aspects of planning and decision making. Parents should be considered as legitimate full fledged members and treated as the primary spokesperson for their child.
- 2) Make an effort to contact and meet parents parents once before the educational planning meeting. A parent will most likely feel more more comfortable if he or she is familiar with at least one person in the room. Initial contact should not involve negative behavior issues or problems with the child. The teacher should demonstrate to parents their awareness of the child's strengths and weaknesses. Too often, teachers dwell on weaknesses such as inappropriate behaviors and only contact parents to help remediate behavioral issues. This sort of contact

can arouse negative feelings in parents or in many cases depress them. These feelings can result in avoidance behaviors for parents especially those who have not fully accepted their child's handicap(s).

- 3) Present test results and other information to parents in a jargon free fashion. Translators should be present for parents with limited English. Parents should be encouraged to ask questions about information or materials they find confusing or unclear.
- 4) Increase communication with parents to at least a once monthly basis addressing issues such as class performance, homework, behavior, upcoming school and classroom activities and IEP information.
- 5) Make all attempts (verbal and written) to get parents to attend meetings. Letters of invitation should be sent out at least 30 days in advance and followed up by a phone call. If parents are involved with outside personnel (i.e. department of Social Services) a coordinated effort should be made to get parents to the meeting.
- 6) Provide parents with copies of reports from all personnel presenting information concerning their child.

- 7) Routinely brief parents on the special process and their rights before meetings so they they will know what to expect from the team meeting. Parents should receive copies of Chapter 766 law and Public Law 94-142 in case they relocate to another state.
- 8) Offer (in and out of school) activities to parents (i.e. field trip organizer, classroom aide, tutor, guest speaker.) Create a calendar of various class/school activities and ask parents to indicate which activities they wish to participate. Leave room on the calendar for them to add activities. Include Individual Education Plan meetings on the calendar with a star beside their child's name.
- 9) Encourage parents to state the educational goals and preferences they have for the child. Parents should also be encouraged to offer suggestions regarding service delivery, instructional strategies and voice their agreement or disagreement with placement and program decisions.
- 10) Consider the priorities and needs of families when developing goals and objectives. Other considerations should include financial realities and social limitations.

- 11) Refer parents to local and national resources in accordance with their child's disability that may offer support services not available in the school.
- 12) Provide ongoing workshops for parents and students in areas such as career awareness, drug information, and sex education.

Strategies for School Systems

- 1) Hold public hearings within communities to ascertain the following information by answering the following questions:
 - a) What are the barriers to active parental involvement?
 - b) What are the primary and secondary needs of parents and families as it relates to special education?
 - c) How would parents like to become involved and what can the school system do to facilitate that involvement.
- 2) Contact community groups and businesses that have direct contact with families and provide them with information (i.e. booklets, pamphlets on various handicaps) that may help them understand

handicapping conditions, resources, and the special education process. This information should be presented in nontechnical print and available in stores, churches, markets and other businesses frequented by parents. Major events should be sponsored between the school and community organizations such as Community Awareness Day, Family Day or Community Health Fair.

- 3) Provide baby-sitting services for parents if they need to bring young children to the school meetings. This could be coordinated with local colleges or high school work programs where students would receive credit or small stipend.
- 4) Develop grants at hiring parents from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. These parents should receive training on special education law, evaluation process, working with school personnel and addressing parent concerns. They would serve as liaisons between the school system and other parents as well as parent trainers. The benefits of such an investment should be well documented (decreased number of hearings appeals, increased parent participation, and improved student services) and presented to the School Committee and Department of

Education to request program maintenance funds and expansion.

- 5) Increase staff development and professional opportunities taken into account the values and beliefs of the parents whom they serve. In-service education should be provided on topics such as: a) Working with Students and Parents from Various Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds; b) Discussing Information in a Jargon Free Manner; c) School-Community Issues as they Relate to Parent Involvement; and d) Brainstorming Activities to Increase Parent Involvement.
- 6) Actively recruit and hire personnel who represent a wide range of cultural, linguistic and economic backgrounds. More male special education teachers should be hired at the elementary and middle school level where there is a significant shortage of males, especially since the majority of substantially separate classes are composed of boys. New personnel should be provided with orientation activities in the area of parent involvement. They should be committed to active parent involvement and willing to engage in mutual decision making with parents

- 7) Set up specific procedures to monitor current practices and procedures in schools that clearly violate the mandates of Chapter 766 or Public Law 94-142 as it pertains to parent and student rights. Schools consistently violating mandates should be subjected to a comprehensive investigation and required to submit a stringent plan of action to remediate problems within a specified time line.
- 8) Establish a systemwide procedure to maintain precise data on parent attendance in school activities and IEP meetings in each school and zone. Schools or zones with low parent attendance should be identified and specific strategies employed to improve parent participation.
- 9) All schools serving special needs students should have a library of relevant information that parents and school personnel may borrow or keep for their personal library.

Study Limitations

The major limitation of this study was the proportion of parents who chose not to participate in the study. While the

rate of response was good at the elementary level, participation at the middle and high schools was low.

There was an inability to gather an adequate cross section of teachers in terms of race and sex. There was only one male teacher at the elementary and middle school level. As mentioned earlier, there was a disproportionate number of Anglo-American teachers to minority teachers.

The study was conducted in three schools in the Boston Public School System. The findings of this study were not designed to be used to generalize occurrences beyond the three schools. It is the researchers' contention that parent involvement in each school varies according to staff, specific programs and practices to encourage parent involvement. It is possible that the results of this study may be typical due to the acknowledgement of a systemwide problem of lack of parent involvement and efforts to change parent involvement practices systemwide.

The instruments used in the study were two questionnaires based on research, previous questionnaires on parent involvement, personal experiences, parent conferences and discussions with school personnel. The validity and reliability of the two questionnaires have not been established. There were no standardized instruments to assess parent and teacher perceptions of involvement in participation,

communication and decision making known to the researcher at the time of the study.

Suggestions for Future Studies

This project provided useful information and strategies that may be effective in getting parents more involved in the IEP process. The following suggestions may be incorporated in future studies to address parent involvement in the special education process:

- 1) This study could be replicated on a larger scale. Parent involvement in more schools could be sampled using a similar questionnaire. Such a study would provide information on widespread practices and perceptions of school personnel and parents. The study could include other school personnel (i.e. therapists, special education administrators etc.) who are involved in the child's education.
- 2) A longitudinal study could be conducted assessing parent involvement through the years from the initial identification and evaluation to graduation or placement in regular education.

- 3) Surveys or questionnaires could be distributed in schools throughout the system to parents of children receiving special education services. The information provided through the study would identify schools that are effective in meeting the needs of parents and those in need of making procedural or programmatic changes.
- 4) The perceptions of parents who have traditionally had an adverse relationship with the school system and those who have had a favorable relationship with the system could be compared. This study would examine whether attitudinal differences affect parents' willingness to participate in school activities, specifically the IEP process.
- 5) Minority parent involvement in an urban school system where there is a higher percentage of minority special education teachers could be studied to assess whether similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds affect parents' willingness to participate in more school activities.

APPENDIX A
LETTER OF PERMISSION TO USE
QUESTIONNAIRE
DEVELOPED BY DR. NANCY S. HORNER



PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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ASSISTANT DIRECTOR SPECIAL INSTRUCTION - REGIONAL PROGRAMS

531 Southeast 14th Avenue / Portland, Oregon 97214

Phone: (503) 280-5665

October 26, 1989

Alvin Crowley
1 Oakview Terrace
Boston, Mass 02130

Dear Mr. Crowley:

You have my permission to use the parent and staff survey contained in my 1986 dissertation title "Parent Involvement in Special Education". Best wishes in your endeavor. I found my study in this area to be very interesting.

Sincerely,

Nancy S. Horner, Ph.D.
Assistant Director
Special Instruction

aos

APPENDIX B
LETTERS OF APPROVAL TO CONDUCT
RESEARCH IN THE BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOL
SYSTEM

OFFICE OF RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENTRESEARCH PROPOSAL REVIEW FORM

Enclosed please find a proposal to conduct educational research in the Boston Public Schools. If we approve this study your zone/school would be directly involved. This document is being sent to you for your input. Please return this completed form directly to my office. Thank you.

Comments:

Maryellen Donahue

Maryellen Donahue, Director
Office of Research and Development
726-6200 x5800

Name of Researcher: Alvin L. Crawley

Affiliation: University of Massachusetts/Amherst

Title of Proposed Research Project: "Perceptions of Parent Involvement in Special Education in Three Boston Public Schools"

Topic of Proposed Research: _____

REVIEWER: __ (check one) ☒ SUPPORT ☐ REJECT

Reasons: _____

Signature: Valeria Lowe Barbara Jackson

Please Print Your Name: VALERIA LOWE Barbara Jackson

Please check one:

☒ Zone Superintendent

Zone West

☒ Headmaster/Principal

School M.E. Curley Middle

Other _____

Department William Trotter Elem

OFFICE OF RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT
RESEARCH PROPOSAL REVIEW FORM

Enclosed please find a proposal to conduct educational research in the Boston Public Schools. If we approve this study your zone/school would be directly involved. This document is being sent to you for your input. Please return this completed form directly to my office. Thank you.

Comments:

Maryellen Donahue
Maryellen Donahue, Director
Office of Research and Development
726-6200 x5800

Name of Researcher: Alvin L. Crawley

Affiliation: University of Massachusetts/Amherst

Title of Proposed Research Project: "Perceptions of Parent Involvement in Special Education in Three Boston Public Schools"

Topic of Proposed Research: _____

REVIEWER: __ (check one) / SUPPORT ____ REJECT

Reasons: _____

Signature: Diana Lam

Please Print Your Name: DIANA LAM

Please check one:

☒ Zone Superintendent

Headmaster/Principal

Other

Zone

School

Department

OFFICE OF RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENTRESEARCH PROPOSAL REVIEW FORM

Enclosed please find a proposal to conduct educational research in the Boston Public Schools. If we approve this study your zone/school would be directly involved. This document is being sent to you for your input. Please return this completed form directly to my office. Thank you.

Comments:

Maryellen Donahue
 Maryellen Donahue, Director
 Office of Research and Development
 726-6200 x5800

Name of Researcher: Alvin L. Crawley

Affiliation: University of Massachusetts/Amherst

Title of Proposed Research Project: "Perceptions of Parent Involvement in Special Education in Three Boston Public Schools"

Topic of Proposed Research: _____

REVIEWER: ___ (check one) ☒ SUPPORT ☐ REJECT

Reasons: _____

Signature: Stanley Swartz

Please Print Your Name: Stanley Swartz

Please check one: Michael Fung

☒ Zone Superintendent

Zone High School Zone

☒ Headmaster/Principal

School Dorchester H.S.

Other

Department _____



DIVISION OF PLANNING AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

MARYELLEN DONAHUE

Director

RESEARCH PROPOSAL NOTIFICATION FORM

The research proposal described below has been:

APPROVED

DISAPPROVED

Marzellen Donahue

Maryellen Donahue, Director
Office of Research & Development

Name of Researcher: Alvin L. Crawley

Affiliation: University of Massachusetts/Amherst

Title of Proposed Research Project: "PERCEPTIONS OF Parent

Involvement in Special Education in Three Boston Public Schools"

Comments: _____

Thank you for your interest in conducting research in Boston Public Schools.

R & D 1989

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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DIVISION OF PLANNING AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

MARYELLEN DONAHUE
Director

June 21, 1989

Mr. Alvin L. Crawley
1 Oakview Terrace
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

Dear Mr. Crawley,

I am in receipt of your research proposal entitled
"Perceptions of Parent Involvement in Special Education in
Three Boston Public Schools".

Enclosed please find copies of the Zone Superintendent and
Principal/Headmaster approval forms for conducting research
in the Boston Public Schools. It is your responsibility to
take these forms and have them signed by the Zone
Superintendent and the Principal/Headmaster of each zone and
school in which you plan to conduct research. Approval for
this study is contingent upon your returning the consent
forms to me.

If you have any questions about this matter, please feel
free to contact either Helen Slattery of this office or
myself.

Sincerely,

Maryellen Donahue, Director
Research and Development

hs

Enclosures

APPENDIX C
LETTERS TO PARENTS AND SPECIAL
EDUCATION TEACHERS

TO: ALL SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

FROM: ALVIN L. CRAWLEY, DOCTORAL CANDIDATE/UMASS-AMHERST

RE: STUDY ON "PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SPECIAL EDUCATION"

DATE: NOVEMBER 14, 1989

As many of you know, I am conducting research on "Parent Involvement in Special Education in three Boston Public Schools." The schools selected are Dorchester High School, Mary E. Curley Middle School and Blackstone Elementary School. The purpose of this study is to develop strategies that will help promote better home-school relations.

Would you complete the enclosed teacher questionnaire? This questionnaire is based on my interview with some of you at the end of the school year. I have also enclosed parent questionnaires for you to distribute to your students. Please encourage students to give the questionnaire to their parents and return it by November 28, 1989.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to contact me at 442-8363 or 427-3180 (Trotter School).

Please return all questionnaires to the special education office by November 28, 1989.

Thank you for your time and attention.

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



MODEL DEMONSTRATION SUBSYSTEM
WILLIAM MONROE TROTTER SCHOOL

BARBARAL JACKSON
Principal

JAMES LONG
V. DA GARDE
Assistant Principal

Queridos padres:

Estoy haciendo un estudio en la William Trotter sobre el interés de los padres en la educación especial.

Estoy interesado en su interés en la planificación de la educación especial de sus hijos. Si esta de acuerdo participar en este estudio, por favor llene el cuestionario y vuevalo antes del 29 de noviembre de 1989.

Los resultados de este estudio proveera información que ayudara a promover una mejor relación entre el hogar y la escuela, tambien ayudara en el desarrollo de las regulaciones y servicios para servir mejor a usted y sus hijos.

Su participación sera muy apreciada.

Sinceramente,

Alvin Crawley
Doctoral student
University of Massachusetts/Amherst

B. Jackson, Principal
Escuela William Trotter

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



MODEL DEMONSTRATION SUBSYSTEM WILLIAM MONROE TROTTER SCHOOL

BARBARA L JACKSON
Principal

JAMES LONG
LYNDA GARDEN
Assistant Principals

Dear Parent:

I am conducting a study at the William Trotter Elementary School on Parent Involvement in Special Education. The purpose of this study is to develop strategies that will help promote better home-school relations and assist in the development of school programs.

I am interested in your current and preferred level of involvement in your child's special education program. If you are willing to participate in this study, please complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to school by November 29.

You may be assured of complete confidentiality. Please do not write your name or the names of family members on the questionnaire.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Alvin L. Crawley
Doctoral Candidate
University of
Massachusetts/Amherst

B. Jackson, Principal
William Trotter Elementary

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



SPECIAL SERVICES

Dear Parent:

I am conducting a study at the Mary E. Curley School on Parent Involvement in Special Education. The purpose of this study is to develop strategies that will help promote better home-school relations and assist in the development of school programs.

I am interested in your current and preferred level of involvement in your child's special education program. If you are willing to participate in this study, please complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to school by November 28.

You may be assured of complete confidentiality. Please do not write your name or the names of family members on the questionnaire.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Alvin L. Crawley
Doctoral Candidate
University of
Massachusetts/Amherst

V. Lowe, Principal
Mary E. Curley School

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



SPECIAL SERVICES

Queridos padres:

Estoy haciendo un estudio en la Escuela Mary E. Curley sobre el interés de los padres en la educación especial.

Estoy interesado en su interés en la planificación de la educación especial de sus hijos. Si esta de acuerdo con participar en este estudio, por favor llene el cuestionario y vuevalo antes del 28 de noviembre de 1989.

Los resultados de este estudio proveera información que ayudara a promover una mejor relación entre el hogar y la escuela, tambien ayudara en el desarrollo de las regulaciones y servicios para servir mejor a usted y sus hijos.

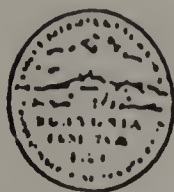
Su participación sera muy apreciada.

Sinceramente,

Alvin L. Crawley
Doctoral Student
University of Massachusetts/Amherst

V. Lowe, Principal
Escuela Mary E. Curley

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



SPECIAL SERVICES

Dear Parent:

I am conducting a study at Dorchester High School on Parent Involvement in Special Education. The purpose of this study is to develop strategies that will help promote better home-school relations and assist in the development of school programs.

I am interested in your current and preferred level of involvement in your child's special education program. If you are willing to participate in this study, please complete the enclosed questionnaire and have your child return it to the special education office (Mr. Kalp) by November 29. This is a very important study and we would really appreciate your participation.

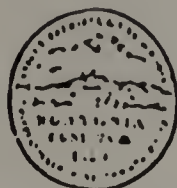
You may be assured of complete confidentiality. Please do not write your name or the name of family members on the questionnaire.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact Alvin Crawley at 442-8363. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Alvin L. Crawley
Doctoral Candidate
University of Massachusetts/Amherst

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



SPECIAL SERVICES

Queridos padres:

Estoy haciendo un estudio en la Escuela Dorchester sobre el interés de los padres en la educación especial.

Estoy interesado en su interés en la planificación de la educación especial de sus hijos. Si esta de acuerdo participar en este estudio, por favor llene el cuestionario y vuevalo antes del 28 de noviembre de 1989.

Los resultados de este estudio proveera información que ayudara a promover una mejor relación entre el hogar y la escuela, tambien ayudara en el desarrollo de las regulaciones y servicios para servir mejor a usted y sus hijos.

Su participación sera muy apreciada.

Sinceramente,

Alvin Crawley
Doctoral student
University of Massachusetts/Amherst

C. Lane, Principal
Escuela Dorchester

APPENDIX D
SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS AND PARENT
QUESTIONNAIRES-ENGLISH AND SPANISH
VERSIONS

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer (with a ✓) these questions about yourself and your family:

1. Your age: ☐ under 18 ☐ 18-25 ☐ 26-40 ☐ 41-55 ☐ over 55
2. ☐ Single parent household ☐ Two parent household
3. Race: ☐ Black ☐ Caucasian ☐ Latino ☐ Asian ☐ Other _____
4. Work Status: ☐ Full-time ☐ Part-time ☐ Not working
5. Family income: ☐ less than \$10,000 ☐ \$10,000 - \$15,000
 ☐ \$15,000 - \$22,000 ☐ \$22,000 - \$30,000
 ☐ \$30,000 - \$50,000 ☐ over \$50,000
6. Your relationship to child: ☐ mother ☐ father ☐ guardian ☐ other
7. Highest level of education: ☐ middle school or less ☐ high school
 ☐ college
8. How far do you live from the school that provides your child with special education services? ☐ less than 1 mile ☐ 2-4 miles ☐ more than 5 miles
 Does this distance affect your participation in school activities? ☐ yes ☐ no
9. Number of children in household: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 or more
10. Number of children receiving special education services:
 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ more than 4
11. Check the labels that have been given to your child by the school:
 ☐ Autistic ☐ Deaf ☐ Blind ☐ Emotionally Disturbed
 ☐ Learning Disabled ☐ Speech/Language Impaired ☐ Mentally Retarded
 ☐ Visually Handicapped ☐ Orthopedically Impaired ☐ Other _____
12. Age(s) of your special needs child(ren): ☐ 1-2 ☐ 3-5 ☐ 6-8 ☐ 9-12
 ☐ 13-16 ☐ 16-21 ☐ over 21
13. Are you pleased with your child's special education program? ☐ yes ☐ no
14. If your child was enrolled in special education last year at this school, how many times did you visit the school? ☐ none ☐ 1-2 times ☐ 3-4 times
 Reason(s): ☐ academic ☐ social ☐ behavior ☐ meeting (type) _____
 ☐ other (please specify) _____
15. How would you rate the fairness of the school in terms of your child's special education program, placement and services? ☐ fair ☐ unfair
16. What can the school do to better serve you and your child? _____

17. How frequently does the teacher/school communicate with you about your child and special education program? How frequently would you like the teacher /school to communicate with you?

Usual frequency

☐ daily
☐ weekly
☐ monthly
☐ quarterly
☐ yearly

Preferred frequency

☐ daily
☐ weekly
☐ monthly
☐ quarterly
☐ yearly

18. What are your current and preferred types of communication with school?

Current Communication

☐ phone calls
☐ written notes
☐ conference by appointment
☐ informal in-person
☐ other _____

Preferred Communication

☐ phone calls
☐ written notes
☐ conference by appointment
☐ informal in-person
☐ other _____

19. How would you rate your overall involvement in your child's special education? ☐ not involved ☐ fairly involved ☐ extremely involved
20. Are you satisfied with your current level of involvement with you child's special education program? ☐ satisfied ☐ desire more involvement
☐ desire less involvement
21. What (if anything) prevents you from being more involved in your child's special education? _____
22. Do you understand the special education process and Chapter 766 law?
☐ yes ☐ no

Please mark (✓) the activities you currently participate in and activities you would like to participate in related to your child's special education. Mark your frequency of participation (never, sometimes or frequently) under the "current participation" and "desired participation columns."

Current Participation			Preferred Participation		
never	sometimes	frequently	never	sometimes	frequently
23.					
24.					
25.					
26.					
27.					
28.					

Please identify your current role in making decisions by making a check (✓) in one of the boxes next to each item. Mark a second (✓) in a box under "preferred role" to indicate the role you prefer in making decisions.

Current Role				Preferred Role			
	school decides	shared decision	parent decides		school decides	shared decision	parent decides
29.				Initial identification of your child as having special needs			
30.				Evaluation of your child's abilities.			
31.				Class placement			
32.				Writing educational plan goals and objectives			
33.				Monitoring your child's progress on educational plan goals and objectives			
34.				Mainstreaming your child with less or non-special needs peers.			
35.				School discipline			
36.				Curriculum used in class			

CUESTIONARIO

Favor de contestar (✓) estas preguntas acerca de usted y su familia:

1. ¿Cuál es su edad? ☐ menor de 18 ☐ 18-25 ☐ 26-40 ☐ 41-55 ☐ mayor de 55
2. ☐ Hogar con un padre solamente ☐ Hogar con los dos padres
3. ¿A que raza pertenece? ☐ Negro ☐ Blanco ☐ Latino ☐ Asiático ☐ Other
4. ¿Que tipo de trabajo realiza? ☐ no trabajo ☐ trabajo tiempo parcial
☐ trabajo tiempo completo
5. Las entradas en su familia son menos de: ☐ menos que \$10,000 ☐ \$22,000-\$30,000
☐ \$10,000-\$15,000 ☐ \$30,000-\$50,000
☐ \$15,000-\$22,000 ☐ mas de \$50,000
6. ¿Cuál es su relación o parentezco con su niño? ☐ madre ☐ padre
☐ encargado ☐ otro _____
7. ¿Hasta que grado estudió usted? ☐ escuela intermedia o menos ☐ superior
☐ universidad
8. ¿Cuan lejos vive de la escuela? Por favor marque la distancia solamente su hijo recibe educación especial. ☐ menos de 1 milla ☐ 2-4 millas
☐ mas de 5 millas
¿La distancia afecta su participación a las actividades de escuela? ☐ si ☐ no
9. ¿Cuantos niños hay en su casa? ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ mas de 6
10. ¿Cuantos hijos reciben los servicios de educación especial?
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ mas de 4
11. ¿En que categoria hasido su hijo classificado?
☐ Autista ☐ Sordo ☐ Ciego ☐ Problemas Emocionales
☐ Problemas de Aprendizaje ☐ Problema de lenguaje ☐ Retardación Mental
☐ Incapacidad Visual ☐ Problemas Ortopedicos ☐ Otros _____
12. ¿Edades de los niños que participan el educación de especial?
☐ 1-2 ☐ 3-5 ☐ 6-8 ☐ 9-12 ☐ 13-16 ☐ 17-21 ☐ sobre 21
13. ¿Esta usted contento con el programa de educación especial? ☐ si ☐ no
14. ¿Si su niño fue matriculado en el programa de educación especial el ano pasado cauntas veces visitó usted la escuela? ☐ ninguna ☐ 1-2 veces ☐ 3-4 veces
Razones: ☐ academica ☐ social ☐ conducta ☐ reuniones
☐ otros (especifique) _____
15. ¿Como usted evaluaria el programa de educación especial en la escuela de de su hijo? ☐ favorable ☐ no favorable
16. ¿Que deberia hacer la escuela para servirle mejor a usted y a su hijo?

17. ¿Cuán frecuente el maestro de su hijo se comunica con usted con relación a la educación especial de su hijo? ¿Cuán frecuente le gustaria que su maestro se comunique con usted?

Usualmente
☐ diaria
☐ semanal
☐ mensual
☐ trimestral
☐ anual

Preferida
☐ diaria
☐ semanal
☐ mensual
☐ trimestral
☐ anual

18. ¿Como se comunica usted; con la escuela en la actualidad?

Comunicación actual
☐ llamadas por teléfono
☐ notas
☐ conferencias con cita
☐ informal en persona
☐ otros _____

Método preferida
☐ llamadas por teléfono
☐ notas
☐ conferencias con cita
☐ onformal en persona
☐ otros _____

19. ¿ Como usted evalaria su participación en la planificación de el programa de educación especial de su hijo?
☐ nunca ☐ algunas veces ☐ siempre
20. ¿ Esta usted satisfecho con su nivel de cooperación en el programa de educación especial de su hijo?
☐ satisfecho ☐ desearia cooperarmas ☐ no desearia cooperar
21. ¿Que esta vitando para que su hijo participe en mas actividades escolares? _____
22. ¿ Entiende usted el proceso de educación especial y sus derechos bajo la ley 766? ☐ si ☐ no

Favor de marcar las actividades en que usted esta participado y las que usted le gustaria participar en relación con la educación especial de su hijo. Marcar la frecuencia de su participación (nunca, algunas veces o frecuentemente) debajo de "participación actual" o "desearia participar."

Participación Actual				Desearia Participar			
	nunca	algunas veces	frecuentemente		nunca	algunas veces	frecuentemente
23.				Assistir a las conferencias de P.E.I. (plan de educación)			
24.				Ayuda escribir el plan de educación de especial			
25.				Visitar el salón de clases			
26.				Participación y voluntaria en el salón de clases			
27.				Asistir al reuniones de padres			
28.				Hablar o escribir al maestro			

Favor de identificar su función haciendo una marca de cotejo (✓) en uno de los encasillados.

Función Actual				Función Deaseada			
	escuela hace las decisiones	escuela y padres hacen decisiones	padre hace la decisión		escuela hace las decisiones	escuela y padres hacen decisiones	padre hace la decisión
29.				Identificación inicial de su niño en necesidad de un programa			
30.				Evaluación de habilidades de su niño			
31.				Clase asignada y servicios			
32.				Escritura de objetivos y metas del plan de educación (PEI)			
33.				Seguimiento de su niño el plan de Educación y Metas y Objetivos.			
34.				Cambiar o mover a su niño a una clase regular o de niños sin necesidades especiales			
35.				Discipline			
36.				Curriculo las clases			

*Gracias por su participación. Favor de devolver este cuestionario antes del 28 de noviembre de 1989.

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions about yourself and your assignment:

1. Your age: ☐ 22-25 ☐ 26-30 ☐ 31-35 ☐ 36-40 ☐ 41-45 ☐ 46-50
☐ 51-55 ☐ 56-60 ☐ over 60
2. Race: ☐ African American ☐ Caucasian ☐ Latino ☐ Asian ☐ other
3. Sex: ☐ male ☐ female
4. Your education: ☐ BA ☐ BA + 15 ☐ BA + 30 ☐ MA ☐ MA + 15 ☐ MA + 30
☐ PhD or EdD
5. How many years have you taught? ☐ 0-2 ☐ 2-5 ☐ 6-10 ☐ 10-15 ☐ over 15
6. How many years have you worked in special education? ☐ 0-2 ☐ 2-5 ☐ 6-10
☐ 10-15 ☐ over 15
7. What age group of children do you teach? ☐ 3-5 ☐ kindergarten ☐ elementary
☐ middle school ☐ high school
8. What teaching endorsement or certificate do you have? ☐ Regular education
☐ No teaching certificate ☐ Moderate Special Needs ☐ Early Childhood Special Ed.
☐ Bilingual education ☐ Severe Special Needs ☐ Speech/Language
9. What is your major assignment? ☐ Special education-resource ☐ special ed.
itinerant teacher ☐ special ed. self-contained class ☐ other
10. How many special needs children do you currently service? ☐ 1-5 ☐ 6-10
☐ 11-15 ☐ 16-20 ☐ 21-25 ☐ more than 25
11. What is the handicapping condition of most of your children? ☐ Autistic
☐ Deaf ☐ Blind ☐ Emotionally Disturbed ☐ Learning Disabled
☐ Visually Impaired ☐ Mentally Retarded ☐ Orthopedically Impaired
☐ Other/Health Impaired ☐ Speech/Language Impaired ☐ Other
12. What is the prototype of most of the children you serve? ☐ 502.1 ☐ 502.2
☐ 502.3 ☐ 502.4 ☐ 502.5 ☐ 502.6 ☐ 502.7 ☐ 502.8 ☐ 502.9 ☐ 503.11
13. What is the primary language spoken in your class? ☐ English ☐ Spanish
14. Does existing school policies and procedures encourage or discourage active parent participation in the special education process? _____
15. How would you rate the fairness of the school in terms of appropriate placement and services to children? ☐ fair ☐ unfair
16. What can the school do to better serve special needs children and their parents? _____

17. How frequently does the teacher/school communicate with most parents about their child and the special education program? How frequently should someone on the staff communicate with parents?

Usual frequency

☐ daily
☐ weekly
☐ monthly
☐ quarterly
☐ yearly

Preferred frequency

☐ daily
☐ weekly
☐ monthly
☐ quarterly
☐ yearly

18. What are your current and preferred types of communication with parents?

Current

☐ phone calls
☐ written notes
☐ conference by appointment
☐ informal in-person
☐ other _____

Preferred

☐ phone calls
☐ written notes
☐ conference by appointment
☐ informal in-person
☐ other _____

19. How would you rate most parent's overall involvement in their child's special education? ☐ not involved ☐ fairly involved ☐ extremely involved
20. Are you satisfied with the current level of involvement of most parents with their child's special education program?
☐ satisfied ☐ desire more involvement ☐ desire less involvement
21. What (if anything) prevents parents from being more involved in their child's special education program? Please describe: _____

22. Do you think most parents understand the special education process and Chapter 766 law? ☐ yes ☐ no

Please mark () the activities most parents currently participate in and the activities you would like most parents to participate in related to their child's special education. Under columns for current and desired participation, please rate the frequency for each activity as never, sometimes or frequently.

	Current Participation				Preferred Participation		
	never	sometimes	frequently		never	sometimes	frequently
23.				Attend IEP conferences			
24.				Help write educational plan			
25.				Visit classroom			
26.				Participate in class activities/trips			
27.				Attend parent meeting			
28.				Talk/write to teacher			

Please identify the current role you feel most parents play in making decisions by marking a (✓) in one of the boxes next to each item.

Mark a second check (✓) in a box under "preferred role" to indicate the role you prefer to have parents play in making decisions. The preferred role may be the same or different than the current role.

Current Role

Preferred Role

	school decides	shared decision	parent decides		school decides	shared decision	parent decides
29.				Initial identification of child as having special needs			
30.				Evaluation of a child's abilities			
31.				Class placement			
32.				Writing educational plan goals and objectives			
33.				Monitoring a child's progress on IEP goals and objectives			
34.				Mainstreaming a child with less or non- special needs peers			
35.				School discipline			
36.				Curriculum used in class			

* Thank you for your participation. Please return this questionnaire and student questionnaires to the special education office by November 30, 1989.

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE OF STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

OF SURVEY ITEMS USING A T-TEST

$$*t = ?$$

$$*H_0; M_p = M_r \quad H_1: M_p \neq M_r$$

$$\hat{M}_p = 1.69 \quad \hat{O}_{p-} = 0.66 \quad n = 636$$

$$\hat{M}_r = 1.60 \quad \hat{O}_{r-} = 0.63 \quad m = 198$$

Calculate t

first need S = pooled standard deviation

$$S^2 = \frac{(n-1)(\hat{O}_{p-})^2 + (m-1)(\hat{O}_{r-})^2}{M + M - 2}$$

$$= \frac{(635)(.66)^2 + (197)(.63)^2}{636 + 198 - 2}$$

$$= 0.42$$

$$S = \sqrt{0.42} = 0.653$$

$$t = \frac{1.69 - 1.60}{0.653 \sqrt{\frac{1}{636} + \frac{1}{198}}} = \frac{\hat{M}_p - \hat{M}_r}{S \sqrt{\frac{1}{n} + \frac{1}{m}}}$$

$$t = 1.69$$

and since degrees of freedom = $n + m - 2 = 832$

is to large t is essentially normal.

So we get p-value from normal table P and get $p = .0910$

* taken from Table 4

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