

Follow-Up Study to Family Members' Reactions to the Initial Special Education Meeting

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Abstract

Family involvement is a central component of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Family members are to be integrated in all aspects of the special education process. At the onset, of family involvement, it is imperative for educators to be aware of possible reactions family members may experience in this initial stage. This follow-up study examined family members' reactions from their initial introduction into the special education system. Interviews with 281 family members over a five-year span provided supportive results of a previous study examining family members' reactions. In this study, the researchers also report on detailed suggestions from the family members on ways to improve their initial involvement were additionally compiled in this study.

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Legal and Legislative Imperatives

The original special education law, titled the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), was enacted by Congress in 1975. This law was later amended in 1990 and the title was changed to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This law mandated that individuals with disabilities would receive an Individual Education Program (IEP) conceptualized by a committee including the family members/parents of children with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). The IEP document is a legal agreement between the school and the family detailing the educational services, goals, and objectives, instructional modifications, and timelines for services for students identified as having an educational disability. This law was groundbreaking because it laid a foundation for parents of students with disabilities to have an equal partnership with the education system in planning the most appropriate program for their children (Boyle & Provost, 2012; Drasgow, Yell, & Robinson, 2001; Friend, 2005; Heward, 2009; Lo, 2014; Martin, Marshall, & Sale, 2004; Mueller & Buckley, 2014; Smith, Gartin, Murdick, & Hilton, 2006; Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2013; Yell & Drasgow, 2000). Although the law has provided for equal partnerships between schools and families for several decades as noted in the cited studies, parental participation in the IEP process has yet to be one of equality, and as such, relationships between parents and educators have been tenuous (Deslandes, Royer, Potvin, & Leclerc, 1999; Friend, 2005; Hammond, Ingalls, & Trussell, 2008; Rock, 2000). Research dating back to the 1970s (McAleer, 1978) and extending to current years has consistently reported similar disparities (Lo, 2012a, 2014; Vaughn et al., 2013).

In order to create true equal partnerships, parents must be involved at each level of their child's educational program. These levels include parental involvement in pre-referral, assessment, IEP development, IEP implementation and monitoring activities. Boyle and Provost (2012) outlined IDEA's increased emphasis on the importance of parental input in the IEP process. They stated school districts must take the necessary steps to include parents in the meetings for all discussions and decisions. In order to create educationally beneficial and legally valid IEPs, schools must be equal partners with families in identifying student needs and determining the array of educational options.

Parental Experiences in the IEP Process

Regrettably, past research has demonstrated that many families have had negative experiences with educational professionals during the initial IEP meeting (Hammond et al., 2008; Vaughn et al., 2013). These researchers indicated that parents reported that IEP meetings focused exclusively on their child's weaknesses. As a result, parents have expressed an assortment of negative feelings experienced during IEP meetings, including guilt, embarrassment, intimidation, and alienation (Fox, Vaughn, Wyatte, & Dunlop, 2002; Hammond et al., 2008; Lo, 2012a). Some family members feel a great deal of pressure and discomfort having to accept responsibilities regarding the development of the IEP (Bateman & Linden, 1998; Lo, 2012b) found family members commenting that school personnel were not culturally sensitive to the families during the IEP process. In this study, family members stated that they thought the school did not want them to be equal partners. Smith (2001), Flynn (2006), Hammond et al. (2008), and Mueller, Milian, & Lopez (2009) found that family members felt intimidated by the IEP process. The parents commented they felt overwhelmed by the number of professionals at the meeting, experienced guilt regarding their child's disability, were confused by the jargon, and believed teachers lacked respect for them. Smith et al. (2006) reported parents may not only feel intimidated by the professionals at the meeting, they may also be distrustful of the school personnel and believe personnel may question why parents are even involved. Parents did not feel prepared for the meeting and did not enter the meeting with the confidence of an equal partner with the school personnel.

Research over a substantial period of time (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2004,2005; Hardy, 1979; Wright, Stegelin, & Hartle, 2007) have reported there are a vast number of reasons parents are nervous to involve themselves with school personnel. These researchers stated many challenges stem from parental beliefs and values. Some parents have had negative school experiences, feel incompetent to work with teachers, may not feel valued by educators, may believe teachers are the authority figure and consequently not open to parental ideas, and they may not be prepared for the professional jargon that frequently occurs at the meeting. Soodak and Erwin (2000) had similar findings stating family members felt the professionals at the IEP meeting were the primary decision makers and family feedback was not valued. Hammond et al. (2008) reported family members stated they did not feel comfortable sharing their ideas at the meeting. They believed the professionals at the meeting might negate any concerns, ideas, and/or opinions they had.

Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwin, and Soodak (2006) noted that a main problematic area in family involvement was when family's priorities for the IEP were neglected. They stated that many family members become disempowered during the IEP process. When family members feel

devalued and their knowledge is not appreciated, their participation diminishes (Bezdek, Summers, & Turnbull, 2010). Families may believe the IEP meeting is a meaningless event with predetermined goals. As a result, family members may view their role as a mere technicality whereby their role is limited to solely providing a signature on the IEP document (Rock, 2000).

Although considered equal partners under the law, many parents are not prepared to function equally because they are not familiar with the school's special education terminology and procedures (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2004, 2005; Lo, 2012a; Turnbull et al., 2010). This disadvantage makes family members hesitant to contribute to educational decision-making. Additionally, they may be vulnerable to making decisions about their child's education that is influenced solely by school personal (Rock, 2000). Parents have also reported feeling as though educational professionals intentionally discouraged their participation in IEP meetings. Furthermore, educators tend to dominate the meetings creating an impression that parental input is not encouraged (Dabkowski, 2004; Mueller & Buckley, 2014).

According to Fish (2006), family members reported that their initial IEP experiences had been negative. Parents indicated that educators were inconsistent with their acceptance of parental suggestions and input that parents believed to be best practice for their children. Additionally, parents expressed concerns about the school's application of both special education law and the IEP process (Hammond et al., 2008). Parents suggested that the IEP meetings should be re-conceptualized to provide parents better opportunities for meaningful participation and preparation prior to the initial meeting.

These researchers also found a vast majority of parents were overwhelmed with the IEP meeting. They just simply did not feel prepared for the agenda, jargon, number of people, and their role on the team. Interestingly, of these parents involved in this study, half stated that they knew their child had a disability, but were still traumatized by the initial IEP meeting. Even with the awareness of their child's disability, these parents had negative experiences including difficulty communicating effectively, understanding terminology, voicing their concerns, or feeling equality with professionals at the meeting.

Promising Practices

From the review of previous studies on parental reactions to the IEP meeting and process, it appears a key to improving the collaboration between family members and professionals is to prepare the parents for the IEP meeting. IDEA states that notices sent to parents regarding an upcoming meeting should contain information on the purpose, time, location, and people who will attend the meeting (Boyle & Provost, 2012). Parents who have been involved in the IEP process have made some general recommendations. They suggested to other parents that if they want to become more actively involved in the IEP process, they must become more knowledgeable about special education law and options (Applequist, 2009; Kayama, 2010). Also, family members need to be unrelenting in demanding the appropriate services for their children (Fish, 2006). Singh (2003) found that parents valued honest and open communication with teachers. Research from this study also found parents considered the quality of communication as important as regularly scheduled opportunities to communicate. Further, parents reported that they appreciated teachers taking the time to explain information to them.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to complete a follow-up study to determine if the types of reactions family members experienced from their initial introduction to special education services were similar to the findings from the original study. Further, this study focused on obtaining parental suggestions to other parents and school personnel to improve the IEP process. In the original study, which occurred over a four-year time span with a total of 212 parents, the research focused on determining the types of reactions family members had from their initial introduction to the IEP process. Results from this study indicated a vast majority of parents (72%) were overwhelmed with their initial involvement. Generally, parents stated they were not prepared for the meeting as they were unfamiliar with the jargon being used, the purpose of the meeting, who would be at the meeting, and their role with the school personnel.

Method

Participants and Setting

This study examined the reactions of family members of children who had been referred for special education services. Of particular interest were their perceptions of attending the initial IEP meeting. The family members consisted of individuals who resided in a southwestern community in the United States. This region borders the United States and Mexico. The population of this region consists of approximately 85% of individuals coming from a Hispanic background. The family members interviewed in this study mirrored the population of this region with approximately 85% of respondents identifying themselves as being Hispanic. The family members came from six rural school districts and one urban school district within this border community. Additionally, the family members interviewed came from a variety of educational backgrounds ranging from less than a grade twelve education to a master's degree. A majority (53%) of the family members' knowledge of special education services at the time of their child's referral ranged from no knowledge to minimal knowledge.

Procedure

Data were collected over a 5 year time span through a semi-structured interview process (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006). A criterion sampling technique was used to identify a sufficient number of participants (family members) for this study (Gay et al., 2006). The sample size included 281 family members who met the following criteria: (a) family members of children in early childhood and elementary schools, (b) family members with children who had recently been referred for initial special education evaluations, (c) family members who had recently participated in the initial IEP meetings for their children, and (d) family members who attended the initial IEP meetings in order to discuss qualification and services for their children. By selecting families following these criteria, this study assures a strong representative sample of parents' perceptions and experiences who are involved in the initial referral and assessment stages of the special education process. The interviews of the family members occurred at a time that followed the formal referral of the family member's child, but prior to the family member's attendance at the initial IEP meeting.

Family members verbally responded to a set of questions addressing: (a) reactions to their child's referral for an initial special education evaluation, (b) reactions to their experiences at the initial IEP meeting, (c) reactions regarding their level of participation at the meeting, (d) degree of

comfort during the meeting, and (e) other questions relating to their perceptions of the initial IEP experience. Please see Table 1 for a complete list of the interview questions.

Table 1.

Interview questions

1. What were your first reactions when you were notified that your child was being referred to be assessed for special education services?
2. How did you feel when you entered the room for the IEP meeting and saw the group of people who would be attending the meeting?
3. Did you feel that your child needed special education services?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) Unsure
4. How would you describe your understanding of the terms and issues discussed at the IEP meeting?
 - a) I understood all of the information;
 - b) I understood most of the information;
 - c) I understood some of the information;
 - d) I didn't understand any of the information;
5. Were you given the opportunity to voice your concerns or opinions?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) Somewhat
6. Did you feel comfortable to voice your opinion or did you feel you had to agree with what was decided by the team
 - a) Felt comfortable
 - b) Had to agree
 - c) Not comfortable
 - d) Both comfortable and had to agree
7. Do you feel your child is receiving the help from the special education program that is needed?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) Somewhat/Unsure

8. Please tell me two things that happened to you in the meeting that were positive.
9. Now please tell me two things that happened to you in the meeting that were negative.
10. What would you recommend to the members of the IEP committee or recommend to other parents who attend the meetings to improve the quality of the meetings?

The protocol for completing the semi-structured interviews was predetermined by the researchers. The individuals who facilitated the interviews were graduate students in a master's degree program within the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Services. These data collectors were seeking a Master's Degree in Special Education or Educational Diagnostician. Family members were selected based on the aforementioned sampling criteria. To minimize selection bias, data collectors identified family members with whom they had limited professional or personal interactions. Data collectors were trained in using a semi-structured interview process which utilized both structured and unstructured questions. This interviewing process enhances validity and reduces bias (Gay et al., 2006). In order to assure standardization across the interviews, data collectors received predetermined interview questions which consisted of a set of ten questions. Five questions were structured with closed-ended items and five questions entailed an unstructured item format with an open-ended design. Since this research was a follow-up study focused on making comparisons of a previous study, the exact same questions were asked and the same procedures were used. The data collectors were trained in the administration of the instrument to ask the questions in both a particular sequence and wording. Each of the comments and responses from the family members was written verbatim.

From the written responses, the researchers analyzed the collection of responses by organizing, categorizing, and interpreting the data. Organization of data included tallying the data from closed-ended questions and assigning percentages of like responses. The data from open-ended questions were compiled according to verbal responses. The data from open-ended questions were categorized according to common themes. Initially, the data were organized and categorized by the researchers independently. This was accomplished by three researchers analyzing the data and identifying themes and categories. Through the process of review and revision, themes and categories of participant responses were agreed upon. Data were then interpreted to determine parental perceptions of the initial IEP meeting (see Figures 1 through 7 and Tables 2 through 4 for results).

Results

Question one asked parents about their first reactions when notified that their child needed to be evaluated for the possibility of an educational disability. There were 323 responses to this question. Please note that although there were only 281 parents in the study, some parents provided more than one response to the question. Forty-seven percent (150/323) indicated they were prepared and relieved to hear the news that their child had a disability, 16% (52/323) indicated that they were shocked by the news and/or felt a sense of disbelief, 14% (44/323) indicated the news made them sad, 13% (42/323) indicated that they were frustrated and/or angry

by the news, and 11% (35/323) stated that the news caused them to be scared and/or worried (see Figure 1).

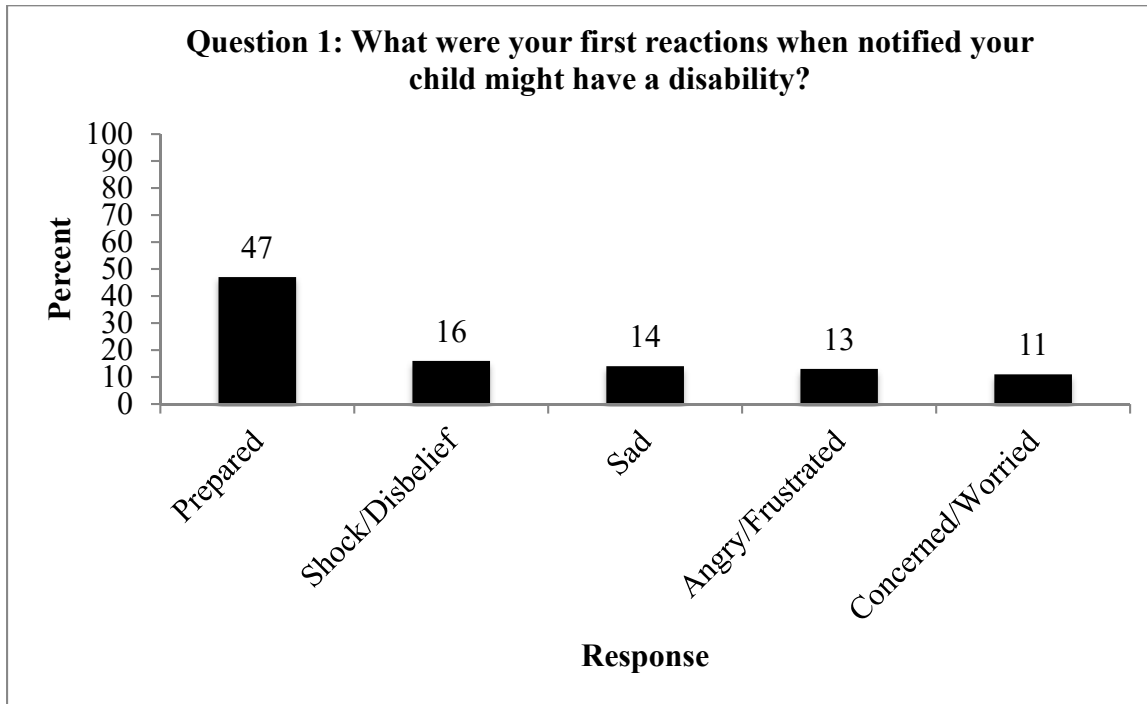


Figure 1. Responses to question 1

Question two asked parents about their initial feelings when entering the first IEP meeting for their child. There were 339 responses to this question. Again please note that some parents provided more than one response to the question. Responses from parents indicated that 69% (235/339) felt overwhelmed, anxious, and/or shocked; 19% (63/339) stated they felt comfortable, 11% (36/339) reported they felt uncomfortable and unwelcomed, and 1% of the parents (5/339) indicated that they felt guilty (see Figure 2).

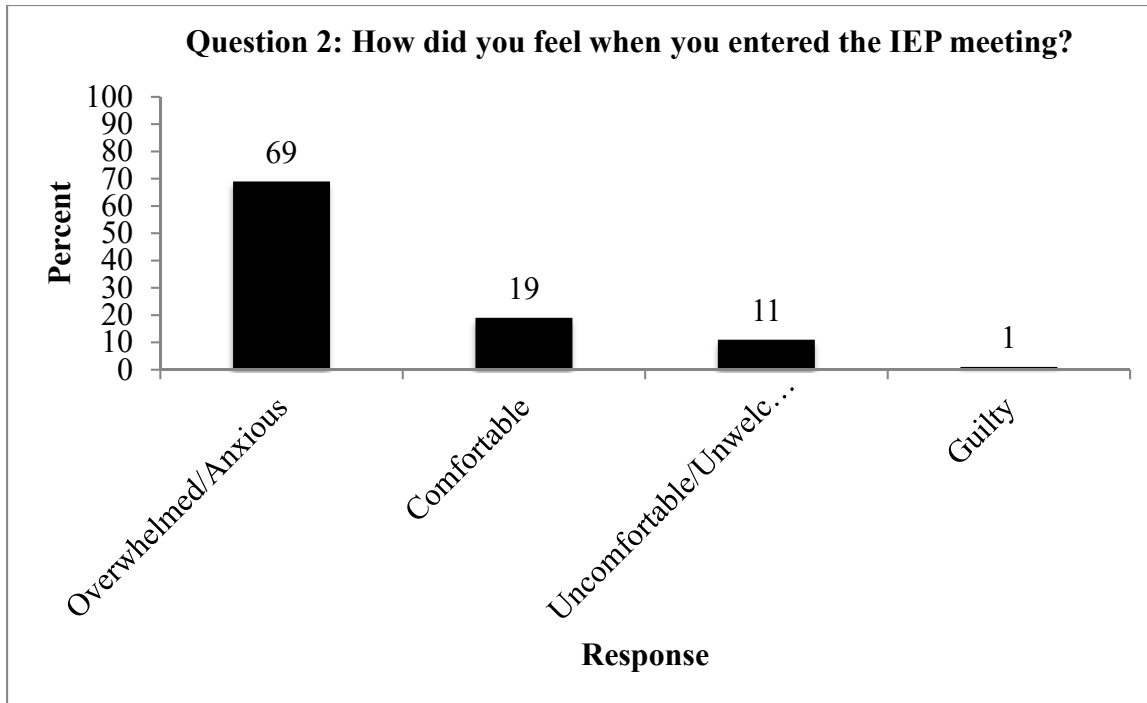


Figure 2. Responses to question 2

Question three asked parents if they felt that their child needed special education services. There were 281 responses to this question. Results indicated that 61% of the parents surveyed (172/281) stated they felt that their child needed special education services and 30% (83/281) indicated that their children did not need special education services. Nine percent of parents (26/281) were unsure (see Figure 3).

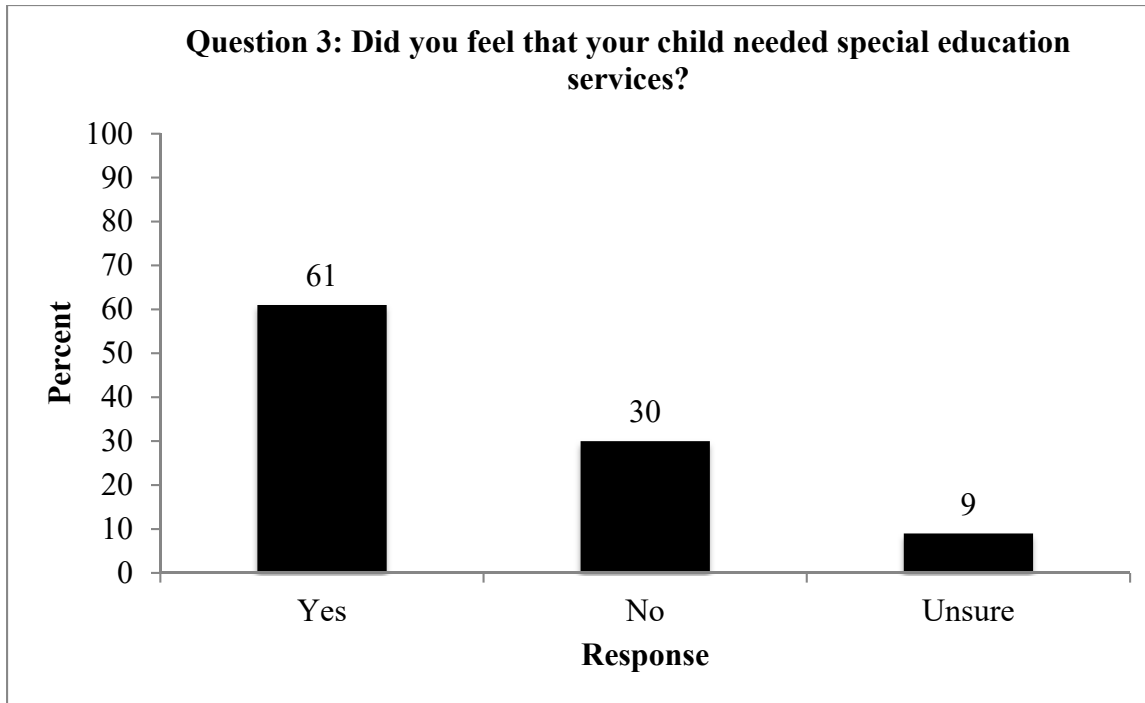


Figure 3. Responses to question 3

Question four asked parents how well they understood the terms and issues presented at the IEP meeting. There were 281 responses to this question. Seventeen percent (47/281) stated that they understood all of the terms and issues. Thirty-nine percent (109/281) stated they understood some and 30% (83/281) stated they understood most of the terms and issues. Fourteen percent (38/281) indicated that they understood none of the terms or issues at the IEP meeting (see Figure 4).

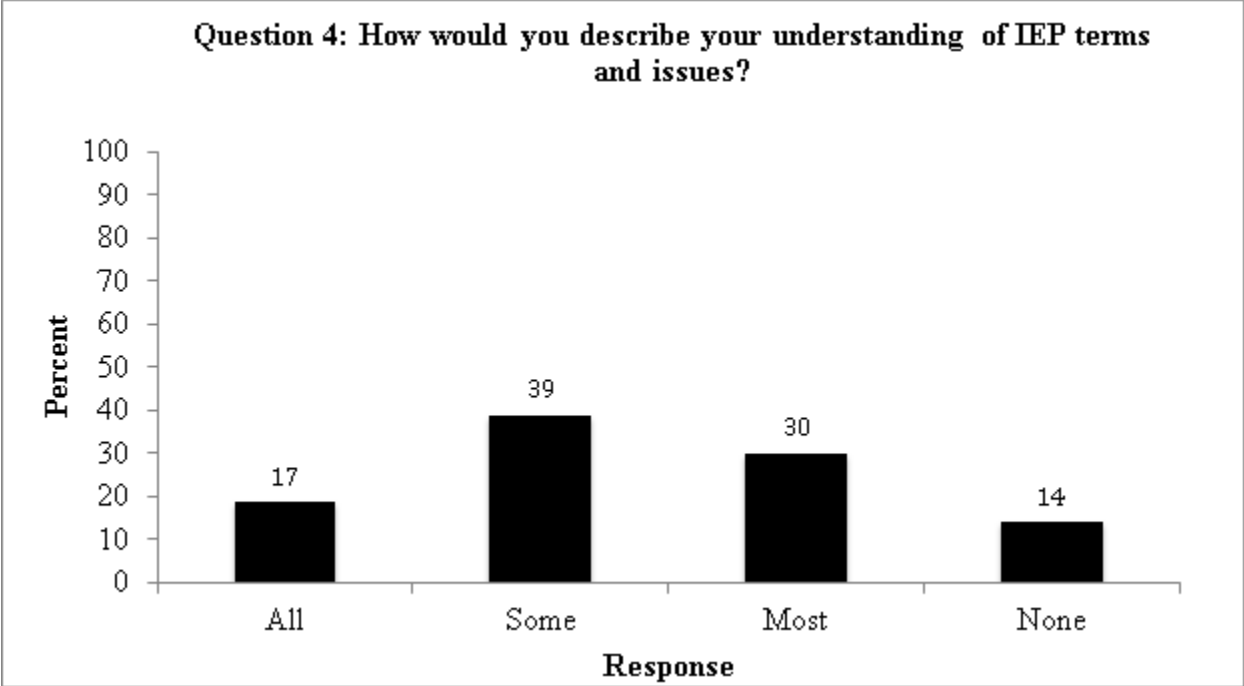


Figure 4. Responses to question 4

Question five asked parents if they were given the opportunity to voice their concerns at the initial IEP meeting. There were 281 responses to this question. Results revealed that 79% (223/281) of parents questioned stated that they were given the opportunity to voice their concerns. Results indicated that 10% of the parents (28/281) stated they were not given the opportunity to voice their concerns, while 11% (31/281) stated they were somewhat/sometimes given the opportunity to voice their concerns (see Figure 5).

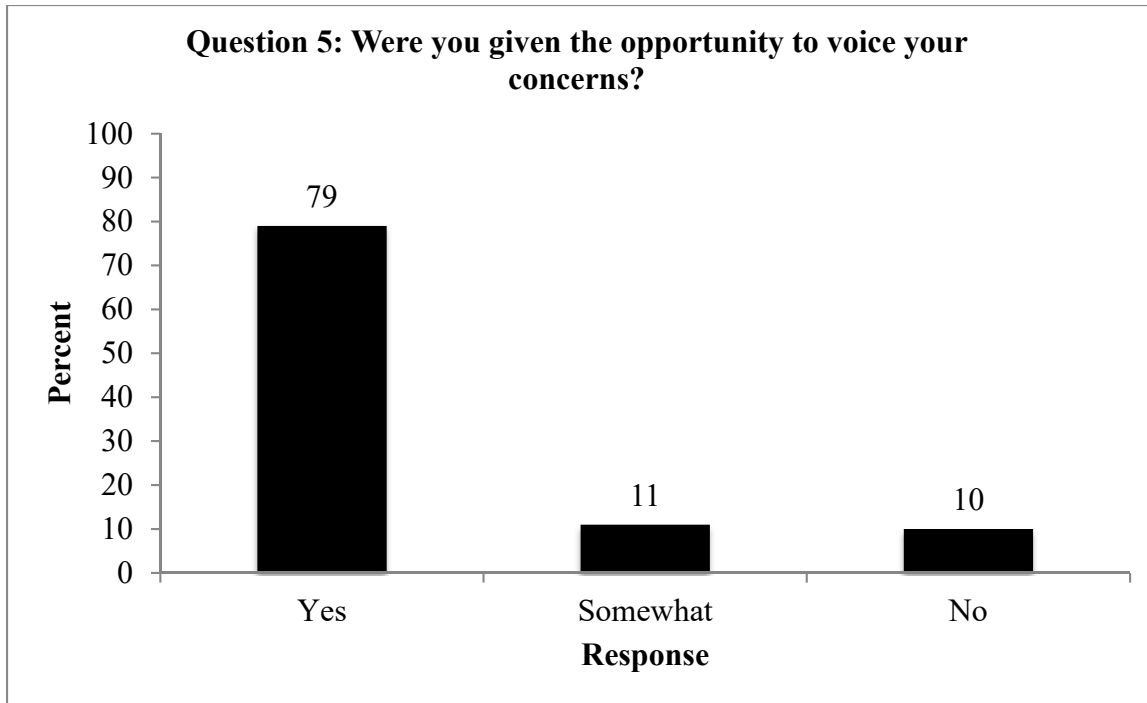
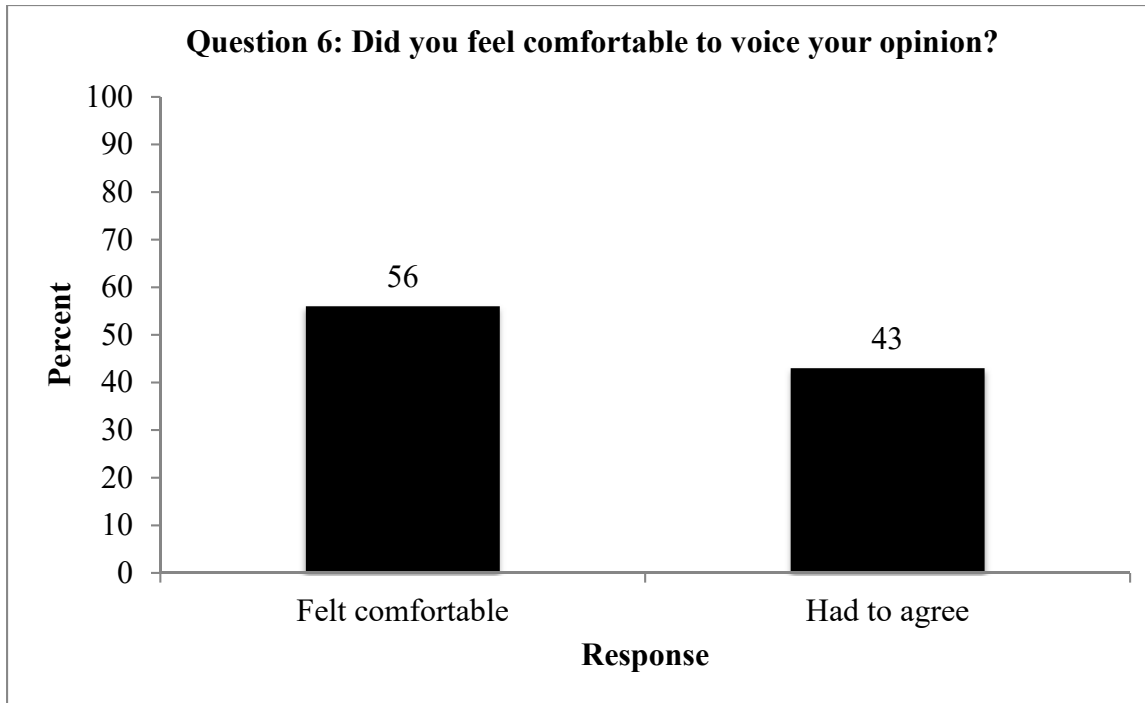


Figure 5. Responses to question 5

Question six asked parents if they felt comfortable voicing their opinions at the IEP meetings. There were a total of 281 responses to this question. Results showed that 56% of the parents (158/281) stated that they felt comfortable voicing their opinions. Results revealed that 43% of the parents (120/281) stated they felt they had to agree with the decisions being made at the IEP meeting (see Figure 6).



Question seven asked parents if they believed special education services determined at the IEP meeting were helpful for their child. There were 281 responses to this question. Of those, 62% of the parents (174/281) indicated their child was benefiting from the special education services. Results stated that 11% of the parents (30/281) believed their child was not benefiting from the special education services and 26% of the parents (74/281) indicated they were unsure if their child was benefiting or that there may be some benefits from the special education services (see Figure 7).

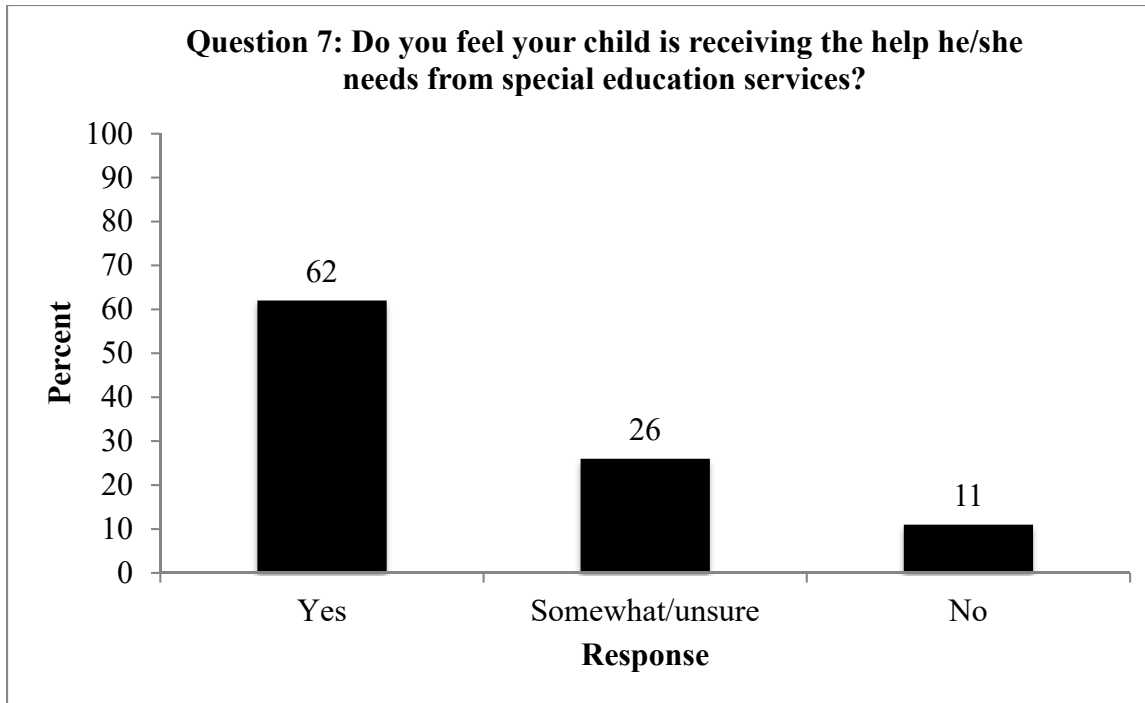


Figure 7. Responses to question 7

Question eight asked parents to tell two things that were positive about their initial IEP meeting experience. There were 410 responses to this question. Results showed that 55% of responses (227/410) indicated parents felt support during the meeting and that their child was going to get the help that he or she needed. An additional positive comment from 19% of responses (76/410) indicated the parents felt it was positive to learn about their child’s special education program. Additionally, 17% of responses (69/410) stated parents were happy to meet the school personnel. Also, 6% of parental responses (24/410) stated it was good to get written information on special education so to make the information at the meeting clearer. Two percent of responses (10/410) stated “nothing” was positive and 1% of responses (3/410) described the most positive point of the meeting was “having the meeting end”. Finally, less than 1% of responses (1/410) indicated “everything” was positive at the meeting. (see Table 2).

Table 2.

Responses to question 8

Feeling supported and that their child was going to get the help he/she needed	55%
Positive to learn about their child special education program	19%

Happy to meet the school personnel	17%
Positive to receive written material on special education	6%
Nothing was positive	2%
Positive to have the meeting end	1%
Everything was positive	<1%

Question nine asked parents to tell two things that were negative about their initial IEP meeting experience. There were 388 responses to this question (see Table 3). Results revealed that 32% of responses (123/388) stated there were negative interactions among people at the meeting. An additional 25% of responses (97/388) identified a negative aspect as being the final outcomes of the meeting. Respondents, who were concerned about the outcomes, stated that school personnel had predetermined meeting outcomes that were brought to the meeting prior to any discussion with family members. Further, 18% of responses (70/388) indicated the meeting was poorly organized and structured. Also, 14% of responses (55/388) stated the meeting was overwhelming with unclear terminology being used and there was a lot of paperwork. Nine percent of responses (36/388) revealed satisfaction with the meeting as the responses stated there was “nothing negative about the meeting”. Finally, 2% of responses (7/388) that indicated the parents did not feel involved or “heard” at the meeting. (see Table 3).

Table 3

Responses to question 9

Negative interaction among people at the meeting	32%
School personnel came to the meeting with predetermined meeting outcomes	25%
Meeting was poorly organized and structured	18%
Overwhelmed with unclear terminology and paperwork	14%
There was nothing negative	9%
Parents did not feel needed or heard at the meeting	2%

Question 10 asked parents to make recommendations to school personnel and other parents based on their experiences at the initial IEP meeting. There were a total of 480 responses to this question. Responses to this question were as follows: (a) 28 % of responses (132/480) stated parents should acknowledge their own expertise, get involved, and ask questions during the meeting, (b) 26% of responses (125/480) indicated that school personnel should be more positive and supportive to the parents during the meeting, (c) 17% of responses (80/480) suggested that parents should be prepared for the IEP meeting before going to it, (d) 9% of responses (45/480) stated school personnel should be more knowledgeable about special education services and options, (e) 8% of responses (37/480) indicated school personnel should use simpler terms and have the language being used in the meeting be the family’s native language, (f) 6% of responses (31/480) suggested that school personnel should not rush the meeting, (g) 4% of responses (19/480) stated that the meeting area should be more comfortable, and (h) 2% of responses (11/480) indicated they had no recommendations as everything that happened at the meeting was positive (see Table 4).

Table 4

Responses to question 10

Parents should acknowledge their own expertise and be involved in the meeting	28%
School personnel should be more positive and supportive of parents	26%
Parents should be prepared for the meeting	17%
School personnel should be more knowledgeable about special education services and options	9%
School personnel should use less professional jargon and be sure parents are understanding the information when English is their second language	8%
School personnel should not rush the meeting	6%
Meeting atmosphere should be more comfortable	4%
No recommendations, everything was positive	2%

Discussion and Implications

This research was a replication of a 2008 study. The same procedures were followed and the same questions were asked as in the previous study. Upon reviewing the results of these interviews, it is obvious that the families' level of comfort during the IEP meetings continues to be a concern. This follow up study from the Hammond et al. (2008) original study suggests that little has changed in educators' success in gaining parental comfort in the initial IEP meetings. Table five provides a side by side comparison between responses of parents' perceptions and reactions to the initial IEP meeting from the original study and in this follow-up study. With a great deal of emphasis in the literature on the importance of parents on the IEP team, one would think the data would be changing in a positive direction. Overall, Table five shows minimal differences between the data during the seven year time span between the two studies.

In the 2008 study, 49 % of the parents had some level of negativity regarding the referral of their child for special education assessment (question one) as opposed to 54% expressing negativity to the referral in the current follow up study. This trend continues throughout each of the questions. In 2008, 86% expressed negative feelings upon entering the IEP meeting (question two) as opposed to 81% today. The current study revealed that 83% of family members did not clearly understand terms used in the meeting (question four) as opposed to 73% in 2008. Little change was noted regarding parents' feelings regarding whether or not they were given the opportunity to fully voice their concerns in the meeting (question five). Another 21% felt hesitant to voice concerns in the current study compared to 17% in 2008. In response to question six regarding parents' comfort in expressing their opinion, 43% reported they felt uncomfortable or forced to agree with the educators opinions in the current study as opposed to 35% in 2008.

Some positive increases occurred in the parents' comfort level of feeling they could disagree with decisions made by the educators. Currently, 39% of the parents questioned whether the educators were correct regarding their child having a disability compared to 25% in 2008. Additionally, 37% of family members in this current study questioned that their child would receive the services they needed compared to 26% in 2008. Although these areas appear to be positive increases in the parents' attitudes, it is important to note that these comments were made to the data collectors and not to the school personnel during the meeting. Thus, it cannot be concluded that the parents actually voiced their disagreements during the meeting.

Table 5

Interview responses from two studies

	<u>2008 Study</u>	<u>2015 Study</u>
Comparison of Key Parental Responses	Affirmed response	Affirmed response
Parents who had some level of negativity regarding the referral of their child for special education assessment	49%	54%

Parents who expressed negative feelings upon entering the IEP meeting	86%	81%
Family members who did not clearly understand terms used in the meeting	73%	83%
Parents who felt hesitant to voice concerns in IEP meeting	17%	21%
Parents who were comfortable in expressing their opinion	35%	43%
Parents who questioned whether the educators were correct regarding their child having a disability	25%	39%
Parents who questioned that their child would receive the services they needed	26%	37%

Upon examining this table, it is evident that there is an ongoing problem of parental involvement in the initial IEP process. Educators clearly need to recognize that we are not making progress in helping parents and/or significant family members to become equal contributors in these meetings. This is an important issue as Public Law IDEA undoubtedly intended to have parents be highly involved in the IEP meetings and that educators should be involved in helping parents achieve this goal.

Although this study focused on parents from primarily Hispanic backgrounds, the results are similar to those findings involving in other ethnic groups (see Deslandes et al., 1999; Friend, 2005; Lo, 2012; Rock, 2000; Simpson, 1996; Turnbull et al., 2006). Although not conclusive, it can be assumed that the results from this study are relevant to other ethnic groups and should be added to the body of research that suggests parents of children with disabilities are not fully participating in planning and implementing their child's education, particularly in the initial stages.

As was noted in the initial study in 2008, a limitation to this research involved the level of knowledge of the parents who responded to the interview. All of the parents who were interviewed had little or no knowledge about the IEP process and the legal guidelines regarding the development of the initial IEP. The legal guidelines that are in place in the United States through IDEA are very family focused and encourage to the maximum extent possible equal participation between professionals and families. Unfortunately, the application of these mandates are not always family focused and do not match the intent of IDEA regarding family involvement. This factor may have skewed the data since parents may not have adequate knowledge about their rights to be an equal participant. If a family member was more aware of his/her legal rights and the legal guidelines, his/her responses to the questions may have been different. Their perceptions of the initial IEP process may have become even more negative as they realized they were not adequately prepared or supported to be an equal partner with school personnel.

The historical fact that parent involvement in the special education process has been problematic for decades and that parent involvement continues to be a challenge today is notable. As reported earlier, research results on parental participation and comfort levels in participation, dating back to the 1970s (see McAleer, 1978) and continuing on to present day has been concerning. This would suggest that education agencies are having difficulty fulfilling the legal requirement of full parental participation in children's special education programs.

IDEA has, since its initial conception, strongly supported the concept that parents of children with disabilities are to be full participating partners in their child's education. However, legal monitoring of IDEA in regards to parental involvement has been limited to issues such as assuring parental signatures are in place for permission to test, to provide services and other tangible components of parental involvement. The structural system of tangible parental involvement has been monitored, but true parental satisfaction, participation, and involvement has not been monitored and consequently not improved upon. School districts may need assistance in developing methods to track the levels of satisfaction, participation, and involvement of parents in their meetings.

Throughout the years of IDEA's reauthorizations, IDEA has guided educational systems in improving their services for the various principles contained in the law. For example, initially, IDEA allowed special education personnel to work only with children who had been identified as having a disability. However, in an attempt to strengthen the principle of least restrictive environment (LRE), in one reauthorization, changes occurred to allow special education personnel to work in a general education setting with any of the children in the classroom as long as there was a child with a disability within the classroom. This provided the educational system with a means to allow special educators and general educators to collaborate and to keep children with disabilities in the general education setting. Additionally, effective practices such as Response to Intervention (RTI) (Vaughn et al., 2013), has changed the identification practices of children with mild disabilities. The RTI model, which focuses on the amount of intervention required to yield student success, is used as a qualifier as opposed to standardized tests and the use of a discrepancy model.

Therefore, in order to effectively stimulate increased parental participation, there needs to be legal mandates added to IDEA that allow for parental assessment and feedback of the IEP process. Successful renovations in future reauthorizations of IDEA targeting parental participation would hopefully result in improved measures of parental satisfaction. For example, if IDEA required that following every IEP meeting with parents, a confidential satisfaction survey would be completed by the parents and their feedback would be given to the school. If these surveys yielded negative feedback, the schools would presumably work harder to gain positive feedback in regards to parental satisfaction. If parental satisfaction surveys were to be a part of a monitoring system it could encourage education systems to develop practices to address satisfaction levels of parental participation and their involvement at meetings.

This follow up study strongly suggests that in order to assure we have adequate parental participation in the special education of children, more attention must be directed at specific strategies to assure this outcome. Currently, the intent of IDEA is to encourage and support parental involvement in all aspects of a child's special education program; however, it appears

there is no catalyst present to evoke this type of equitable involvement. Perhaps if measures of parental satisfaction regarding their participation in the IEP process were part of the equation, school practices might make some positive changes.

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