

EDUCATIONAL EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS OF SEVERELY
HANDICAPPED ADULT STUDENTS

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By
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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mom, Billie Stuchlik. Her patience, inspiration, and love have pushed me through many obstacles only to come out a better person. Her many examples of perseverance have proven to be a guiding light on my journey to complete my Master of Arts and in life. Billie has been a friend, confidant, and hero to me in many ways, and it makes me very proud to dedicate this to her. I am grateful for her love, kindness, and intellect, and would not be who I am today without her.

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To Suzanne Whitehead, thank you for serving on my thesis committee. I sincerely appreciate your time, effort, and expertise in my academic journey.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the educational expectations of parents of severely handicapped cognitively impaired adult students. Interview questions were developed based on educational research regarding parents of severely handicapped adult students and their educational expectations. Interviews conducted with parents included questions about educational expectations for their students, the degree to which they were satisfied with their level of school involvement, and what they believe is important when building positive relationships between home and school. The responses from this qualitative study were transcribed, verified for accuracy by the participants, and analyzed using a color coding method. Themes drawn from participant responses included parents expecting their adult students to continue learning, be successful in the community, interact with peers, communicate effectively, be as independent as possible, and hold part-time jobs.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Special education teachers face many challenges including the lack of support from school administration, an overwhelming amount of paperwork, and supervision of paraprofessionals (Eskay, Onu, Ugwuanyi, Obiyo, & Udaya, 2012). Consequently, the large turnover of special education teachers is quite high during the first five years of employment. However, the rewards of the job cause many to continue (Eskay et al., 2012). These teachers believe in giving children every opportunity to reach their fullest potential.

According to Eskay et al. (2012), for 150 years prior to the paradigm shift of the 1960s, it was the cultural norm to institutionalize children with disabilities. Anton (2009) stated pediatricians would ask parents to sign papers to legally send their disabled children to institutions as they were considered to be “by-products of reproduction gone awry” (Anton as cited in Eskay et al., 2012, p. 395). These children were subsequently discarded socially.

In the 1960s, attitudes regarding the education of children with disabilities began to change. The change in paradigm began with Dr. Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights movement. Dr. King’s courage inspired several advocacy groups and President John F. Kennedy’s panel on mental retardation (Eskay et al., 2010). Eunice Shriver, President Kennedy’s sister, was dedicated in her efforts to provide

support for parents who were choosing to raise their disabled children at home and brought awareness to the nation about the humanity and educational needs of the children with disabilities (Eskay et al., 2012).

Congress set up the Bureau for Education of the Handicapped in 1966 under Title VI of the Elementary and Secondary School Act to provide funding for free and appropriate public education for students with intellectual disabilities. In 1970, grants became available for educational programs for disabled children through the Education of the Handicapped Act, PL 91-230 (Bicehouse & Faieta, 2017). A Congressional report in 1975 stated that over half of the disabled children were not receiving formal education services (Bicehouse & Faieta, 2017). In light of this report, in 1975, Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, PL 94-142, which “mandated federal funding for special education” (Eskay et al., 2012). Public Law 94-142 was very significant in the history of special education as it required schools to provide the least restricted environment for students and a free and appropriate public education for students with special needs (Eskay et al., 2012). Also, PL 94-142 protected the rights of parents of special education students to acquire information and participate in educational decisions for their children (Keogh, 2007). In 1986, the law expanded again to provide for infants and toddlers (Eskay et al., 2012). Through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997, special education children were to receive appropriate services to prepare them for independent living and employment (National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2004).

Statement of Problem

Hebel and Persitz (2014) found that parents of special education students feel detoured and pessimistic when they attend Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings and believe the IEP team has already decided what is best for their child without discussing it with them. Abed (2014) stated parents of special education students feel ineffective, not confident, and powerless. According to Abed (2014), teachers are concerned with time schedules, compliance with government laws and district policies, and efforts to accommodate other members of the IEP team. It can be difficult when neither the parents nor the teacher trust each other regarding the child's education, making it difficult to establish partnerships between home and school (Abed, 2014).

Research Questions

1. What are the expectations of parents of severely handicapped special education adult students regarding their child's education?
2. Are parents of severely handicapped special education adult students satisfied with their level of involvement at school?
3. What do parents of severely handicapped special education adult students believe is important in order to build positive relationships between home and school?

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the educational expectations of parents of severely handicapped adult students and their teachers. This study may reveal new

information regarding the home – school partnership from a parent’s perspective and the challenges faced by both parents and teachers. Also, the results of this study may be useful to parents, teachers, administrators, and other IEP team members who wish to strengthen the effectiveness of special education services for students.

Limitations

This study is limited to the parents of severely handicapped special day adult students in a suburban high school located in the San Joaquin Valley of California. As such, there was a small sample size, of which the study results may not be transferable to the public at large.

Definitions of Terms

Definitions for the following terms are included to provide clarity for the reader in understanding the references used within this study:

Severely Handicapped Special Day Class

A severely handicapped special day class creates an environment for students to learn how to be independent, self-sufficient, and self-confident by teaching hygiene, social skills, and job skills. A component of the curriculum is community- based instruction which is designed to teach special education students about safety in the community, public transportation, and independent living.

Individual Education Plan

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a legal document that states the student’s demographics, transition goals, present level of performance, IEP goals, and special

factors including where the student attends school and the date the student will either graduate, achieve a Certificate of Promotion, or age out. The IEP also includes references to any outside service providers, services provided to the student to include accommodations and modifications, district service providers, length of services, services performed, transportation, extended school year guidelines, assessments, an IEP notes page, excusal from meeting, parent notice of meeting, and a signature page stating the parent agrees with all, part, or none of the IEP. Finally, the IEP includes information on Medi Cal billing.

Summary

This study will examine the expectations of parents of severely handicapped adult students and identify ways to build better working relationships between parents of severely handicapped students and their schools. Chapter 2 will present a review of the literature that is pertinent to the topic of this study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the educational expectations of parents of severely handicapped adult students. For this literature review, studies on the topic of this study are presented. Questions regarding parents' perceptions are answered through a variety of research and practitioner studies.

Evolution of Special Education

Prior to the 1970s, tens of thousands of children with disabilities lived in state institutions for persons with mental illness and mental retardation. The institutional environment was restrictive and provided minimal care including only bare necessities like food, clothes, and shelter for children with disabilities. Some children with disabilities had self-injurious behaviors which were not addressed. Children with disabilities were only housed and not assessed, educated, or rehabilitated, and they were thought to be uneducable (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Since that time, many laws have been created to help and assist children with disabilities and their families. In 1974, Congress addressed the issue for two groups of children with disabilities. The first group of children consisted of over a million special needs children who had been completely excluded from public education.

The second group consisted of over half a million children with disabilities who had only limited access to the education system. Both groups were historically

denied an appropriate education. Congress responded by passing a landmark law for children with disabilities. The act was called the Education for the Handicapped Act (EHA), also known as EHA; PL 94-457 (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Public Law PL 94-142 had a significant impact on the lives of children with disabilities and their families. This law has four purposes. First, it guaranteed a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and the related services designed to meet the unique needs of every child with disabilities. Second, this law assured the rights of children with disabilities and their parents. A copy of the Parents' Rights is given to parents at every Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting. Third, PL 94-142 authorized financial incentives to assist states and localities in providing for the education of children with disabilities. The financial incentives were created to ensure the needs of special needs students were met, regardless of available funding. The fourth purpose of PL 94-142 was to assess and assure the effectiveness of efforts to educate all children with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

On October 30, 1990, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act PL 94-142 and its subsequent amendments was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) PL 108-446. The six improvements included in IDEA were to further benefit children with disabilities and their families. First, a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) was expanded to all children with disabilities regardless of severity at no cost to the parents/guardians. Also, provisions were changed to include services provided to children with disabilities through their schools including occupational therapy, physical therapy, orientation, and mobility

instruction (California Council for Developmental Disabilities, 2011). As IDEA evolved, the services included speech and language, assistive technology, adaptive physical education, and nursing.

Second, the concept of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) required a full continuum of alternative placements for children with disabilities, ranging from mild to profound. The Least Restrictive Environment is designed to provide co-education opportunities with general education students. According to the California Protection and Advocacy System (2011), the Least Restrictive Environment requires that students with disabilities receive their education with non-disabled peers, to the maximum extent appropriate. Secondly, the law requires that special education students shall not be removed from regular classes, even with supplemental aids and services, unless education in regular classes cannot be achieved satisfactorily (20 United States Code (U.S.C.) Sec. 1412(a)(5)(A); 34 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) Sec. 300.114).

Third, Individual Education Plans (IEP) must contain several distinct sections including Present Levels of Performance that states the level at which a child with disabilities is currently performing. This provision is the basis for establishing a baseline to create new annual goals and objectives. After children with disabilities reach the age of 14 and before they turn 16, transitional goals must be established for them for the purpose of providing an education path to adulthood (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Fourth, parents of children with disabilities have the right to Procedural Due

Process, which means parents have the right to confidentiality of records, access to all records, acquisition of an independent evaluation of their child, notification in the native language of the parents, the proposed changes to their child's education classification or placement, an impartial hearing should there be a disagreement regarding their child's education plan, and representation by legal counsel (California Council for Development Disabilities, 2011) .

Fifth, nondiscriminatory assessment is a component of IDEA. This section states that schools are required to evaluate students suspected of having disabilities at no cost to the parents (Lee, n.d.). Before a child can be identified as disabled and receive special education services, he/she must be evaluated by a multidisciplinary team and trained personnel in all areas of suspected disabilities prior to placement or planning (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Sixth, parents have the right to a voice in their children's education, to be a part of the decision-making process, and know their child has the right to a Free and Appropriate Public Education. Parents of children with disabilities have more power than most of them realize to advocate for their children (Lee, n.d.).

In 1973, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act was added to protect children with disabilities. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, is a civil rights statute that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities and extends to state and local government services and programs and activities, including public schools, even if they do not receive federal financial assistance. Students who have mental or physical disabilities and qualify for Section 504 can be educated in a regular

classroom with supplementary services and receive “reasonable accommodations” for curricular and extracurricular activities including but not limited to extra time to complete assignments, instructional materials in modified print, calculators for mathematics and science activities, and placement near the front of the classroom (Office of Civil Rights, 2018).

Special Education Programs that Encourage Parent Involvement

The San Ramon Valley Unified School District Parent Support Network involves trained resource parents who provide support and information to parents of special education students. Of the many district websites viewed, San Ramon Valley School District is the only district that offers a program for parents of special education students. This network is committed to supporting the needs of both parents and staff as collaborative partners in the process of educating the child (San Ramon Valley, 2017-2018).

Often, parents of special education students feel isolated, judged, and misunderstood. The Parent Support Network offers moral support to parents and encourages them to feel comfortable and optimistic about the future. Part of the Parent Support Networks’ mission is to promote positive relationships between the parents and the school community. This network also provides a safe, non-judgmental, and confidential place for parents to share experiences and connect with other parents who are in similar situations. The parent volunteers offer emotional support and understanding to parents of recently identified children and provide information on community resources and additional support groups, along with

educational information on various disabilities (San Ramon Valley, 2017-2018).

The Los Angeles Unified School District Parent Resources for Engagement and Student Success (PRESS) program offers workshops to parents of special education students. The workshops provide guidance for helping children be successful throughout their educational years (up to 21 years of age). The workshops are presented throughout the district. The school district sends out calendars for parents of special education students showing the dates and times for each workshop.

Each workshop lasts two hours and is available in both English and Spanish. Workshop topics address home and school collaboration, Least Restrictive Environment, careers, adult transition options, technology and alternate curriculum, and early literacy. In addition to these workshops, the Los Angeles County School District also offers an Autism Workshop Series for parents (Los Angeles Unified, 2017).

Vista Unified School District offers resources and opportunities to parents of special education students. The Special Education Department's Parent Resources website is designed to encourage parents of special needs children to participate in the many programs available to them. The program cultivates partnerships with parents through education, workshops, videos including the "Extreme Parenting Video Project for Parents" series, ongoing communication via the webpages, Individual Education Plans, volunteering in classrooms, and links to publications and resources.

Through these services, parents receive valuable information, and opportunities to meet and mingle with other special education parents (Vista Unified

School, 2017).

Research Studies

Fishman and Nickerson (2014) conducted a study on motivation for school involvement of parents of students with disabilities. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether various involvement choices of parents of elementary school special education students were based on motivational factors. This study took place in two suburban school districts in upstate New York.

The authors selected 137 parents and guardians of elementary school children who were classified with a special education disability. A survey of parents was used to assess factors that impacted that parents' motivation to be involved in their disabled child's education.

Descriptive results of this study indicated that direct, targeted communication with parents appears to motivate them to be involved in their children's education, and parents are likely to be involved when children specifically request involvement. Parents reported higher levels of school-based involvement when their perceptions of time and energy were greater; also, parents of higher economic backgrounds were more likely to be involved in their child's education as well. However, the greatest factor that motivated parent involvement was teacher invitations. Specific and direct communication from a child's teacher is important and influential when encouraging parents to participate in meetings, contribute to educational planning, and to reciprocate communication efforts.

Murray, Handyside, Straka, and Arton-Titus (2013) conducted a study on the

impact of a 16-week special education course for parents. The purpose of the study was to understand the experiences of parents who participated in both the pre-course and post-course. This study took place at a midsized Midwestern university in collaboration with school districts and community agencies.

The participants were selected on the basis of county residence, child's disability category, and eligibility for agency services. Each participant was paid a stipend of \$50 per class, or \$800 per semester for transportation and child care. The data were collected from four to ten participants over four years using guided research questions before, during, and after attending the course. The data were transcribed, analyzed, coded, and categorized using thematic analysis.

The findings of this study demonstrated that the course contributed to the parents' sense of empowerment. The courses focused on playing an active role in the education and decision-making process, receiving access to resources, affecting change in one's own life and/or community, feeling part of a group or sense of belonging, having a sense of self-efficacy, experiencing hope, changing perceptions, learning to think critically, and receiving respect. Post-course results clearly show that parents felt better equipped to participate fully in decisions about their child's education after the course. All participants experienced a change in their perceptions towards professionals through increased personal interaction and communication. The participants in this study were much more inclined to be involved in their child's education and to believe they can make a difference.

Bush, Cohen, Eisenhower, and Blacher (2017) conducted a study on the

educational expectations of parents whose children were diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between parents' expectations and their children's level of disability and success in school. This study took place in northeastern United States and southern California. The authors recruited 121 parent participants through schools, autism clinics, and word of mouth. The authors used a mixed methods design. The parents participated in a structured interview. The qualitative data acquired was transcribed, analyzed, and coded. The Social Skills Improvement System-Rating Scale (SSIS-RS) was administered to collect quantitative data. A regression analysis was used to analyze the quantitative data.

Parents of children who exhibited fewer challenging behaviors reported more positive expectations for the school year compared to parents whose children exhibited more behavior problems. Parents with higher education and those with positive relationships with teachers reported higher academic expectations. Parents' perceptions of quality relationships with teachers were significantly correlated with the expectations for the school, while parents' self-reported involvement with the school was not.

Rodriguez, Blatz, and Elbaum (2014) conducted a study on views of parents regarding school involvement. The purpose of this study was to identify and evaluate the relative importance of eight themes related to schools' efforts to facilitate parent involvement and the parents' involvement with their child at school. This study was conducted at 18 schools in 8 school districts in Florida.

The state of Florida contacted special education directors regarding parent participation in this study. The districts contacted the participating schools, and 96 participants who had children with disabilities and agreed to participate. Participants were divided into 17 focus groups and interviewed for approximately 90 minutes. The qualitative data were transcribed, coded, and imported into ATLAS.ti software. Three major themes were identified as a result of the analysis of data. First, successful schools promote collaboration, solicit parent input, encourage teacher accessibility, and communicate frequently with parents through a variety of means. Second, this study also suggests parents become involved if schools do not demand participation. Parents also become involved when they perceive schools as resisting their involvement or fail to provide quality services and accommodations for their child.

Morrison, Sansosti, and Hadley (2009) conducted a study on the needs and expectations of parents regarding their college-bound students with Asperger's Syndrome. The purpose of this study was to explore parents' perceptions regarding the supports, accommodations, and strategies students with Asperger's Syndrome need in order to adjust to social expectations at the college level. This study took place in a Catholic university in the Midwest.

The authors selected four parents who were recruited through a network of professionals associated with the local Asperger Syndrome Association. The participants were interviewed as a focus group using guided interview questions which were audiotaped.

The audiotaped interviews were transcribed. Two reviewers independently reviewed the transcripts and identified segments that pertained to achieving competence, managing emotions, and moving through autonomy toward independence. Segments were coded, and themes were grouped and counted.

Two main themes were derived from the analysis of the data. The first theme was reasonable accommodations and supports. The participants perceived the need to collaborate with the college's Student Services Programs/Disabilities Office for scheduling considerations to match their child with professors who understand the characteristics of Asperger's Syndrome and use handouts, guided notes, and prompts. The second theme focused on self-advocacy needs and supports. The parents were concerned that their children would not maximize the potential for success without advocating for themselves, which is often a challenge.

Summary

Chapter 2 provided the purpose of this study which was to determine the expectations of parents of severely handicapped students regarding their child's teachers. Chapter 3 will present the methodology, which includes the sample population, research questions, instrumentation and data collection, and data analysis of this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the educational expectations of parents of severely handicapped adult students. The following chapter will present the sample population, research questions, instrumentation and data collection, and data analysis.

Sample Population

The volunteer participants in this qualitative study were the parents of severely handicapped adult students who attend a school in the Central Valley of California. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants for this study. “The researcher selects participants on purpose because they are considered to be most appropriate for this study” (Clark & Creswell, 2015, p. 235). The participants were selected because they are parents of severely handicapped adult students and have had many years of experiences with the schools their children have attended. Pseudonyms for three participants, the ages of their severely handicapped adult children, and the years of experience with the school their children attend are listed in Table 1. The names of these parents, their students, and the school will remain anonymous throughout this study.

Table 1

Participation Information

Participant	Age of Student	Years of Experience with Schools
Annette	18	15
Rhonda	20	17
Brenda	19	17

Instruments and Data Collection

Parents were interviewed individually in order to maintain confidentiality and support an environment where each responded without the presence of outside influences.

The thesis committee chair approved the interview questions (See Appendix A), that were developed for this research. Letters of Consent (See Appendix B) were distributed and signed in advance by the three parents who participated in this study.

The interview questions attempted to address the following research questions:

- R1. What are the expectations of parents of special education adult students regarding their children's education?
- R2. What is the school involvement of parents of special education adult students?
- R3. What do parents of special education adult students believe is important in order to build positive relationships between home and school?

Participants were interviewed for approximately 45 minutes and were digitally recorded to secure each interview and ensure that each response was accurately

captured. Notes were taken and recorded by the interviewer during each interview in order to document parent reactions and observations. Individual parent interview responses were transcribed upon the completion of the interview.

Data Analysis

After the transcription of the digitally recorded responses, the participants received copies to verify accuracy. All of the data collected were analyzed by color-coding. The evidence provided from the interviews, notes, reactions, and observations were used to identify themes that addressed the three guiding questions. References to each theme were noted by color. The results of this study were assembled and reported in the findings. The Institutional Review Board of California State University, Stanislaus, approved the methodology for this research study. Written and electronic documents will be destroyed three years after this study is concluded to ensure the confidentiality of the participants.

Summary

Chapter 3 presented the methodology that includes the sample population, research questions, instrumentation and data collection, and data analysis. Chapter 4 will provide a summary of the data collected in relation to each research question.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the educational expectations of parents of severely handicapped adult students. Participants for this study included three parents of severely handicapped adult students who attend a school structured to prepare severely handicapped adults to live as independently as possible after aging out of the program at 22 years of age. This chapter provides a summary of the interviews as they relate to each research question.

Interviews

Interview 1

Annette is the aunt and guardian of an adult male student who is currently 19 years of age. Although she is not formally educated, she is well-versed in special education and spends time researching autism, her nephew's disability. Annette is single and has no children of her own.

What are the expectations of parents of special education adult students regarding their child's education (R1)? Annette stated that she wants educators to develop her nephew's gifts, talents, natural abilities, and believes that special education has met her expectations. It is important to Annette for educators to continue challenging her nephew and teaching new things that will help him in the future. Annette wants her nephew to be happy at school so he will continue to

attend, as he easily gets bored at home. Weekly, one-on-one communication with the teacher via phone, text, and notes is very important, and according to Annette, it is the best way to be involved in her nephew's education. Consistent communication helps the teacher grasp her nephew's home life as well. Annette talks with her nephew about his time at school for 30 minutes daily to show interest, enthusiasm, and that she values his education.

Additional expectations of Annette include additional opportunities available in the school district or sites and the city in which her nephew attends school. As stated, Annette spends a considerable amount of time researching autism and has found that the state of California has funding available for after school programs designed specifically for special education students. A portion of the funds available is allocated to hire respite workers to fill these positions.

Annette stated that there are no after school services within the district or nearby sites for special education students. Annette believes this district and its subsequent sites does not provide an adequate amount of resources for special education students. Annette is pro-active in her efforts to make changes and has written a letter to the city asking for "all abilities" parks to enjoy with her nephew. Other cities recognize the desperate need and have "all abilities" parks; one city has nine. She would like to see services available such as after school programs, clubs, and respite for students with special needs.

Annette described her nephew as not having "boundaries" but having "limitations" and gave the example of not sending him into a parking lot to gather

carts by himself because he would wander and get lost. She noted that her nephew would get hit by cars because he does not look for them, and eats food off the ground if he sees it. Annette is very aware that her nephew will never be able to live on his own. However, she proudly stated that he can sing well, and spin in a chair faster than anyone. Optimally, Annette would like her nephew to increase the use of his voice as opposed to grunting and use more sensory items to self-calm.

Ultimately, Annette wants a teacher who will nurture the use of her nephew's natural gifts and abilities to further his education. It is very important to Annette that her nephew learns to be as independent as possible and believes communication with the teacher is key to keeping him engaged, challenged, and interested in attending school.

What is the school involvement of parents of special education adult children (R2)? Annette talks with the teacher on a regular basis to learn of her nephew's academic progress so she can follow up at home. Also, Annette discusses her nephew's interests so she can be helpful at school and incorporate them into his daily schedule when appropriate. Annette takes IEPs seriously and views them as an opportunity to explore new ideas, discuss progress, and provide input on future goals. Annette believes it is important for parents to make a difference in their child's education and to have a relationship with the teacher built on trust and respect. Annette's involvement includes consistent communication with the teacher, visits to the classroom, purchases of supplies, and pro-active efforts in her nephew's education.

What do parents of special education adult students believe is important in order to build positive relationships between home and school (R3)? Annette believes communicating with the teacher at least once a week is important, and does so by phone, text, notes, and meetings in person. Annette enjoys telling the teacher about her nephew's home life and things he does and shares pictures of him enjoying his day. Mutual respect is very important to her. Also, Annette communicates with the bus drivers about her nephew's morning and afternoon ride. Annette shares her values, beliefs, and expectations with the teacher as well. For example, they both believe that her nephew should not watch anything violent or with sexual content on television because he learns from watching other's behaviors.

Annette believes the district and its subsequent sites and the city should collaborate and be more pro-active in providing after school activities for special education adult students. Annette believes that California is far behind other states in the area of special education and continues to cut programs. Annette likes the "No Kid Goes Hungry" program provided by the district during the summer and believes it builds positive relationships between home and school. Annette believes services such as after school programs would increase positive relationships between home and school.

Interview 2

Rhonda is the parent of an adult male student who is currently 20 years of age. Rhonda is an immigrant from Mexico and a high school dropout. She is married and has a four-year-old daughter.

What are the expectations of parents of special education adult students regarding their child's education (R1)? Rhonda expects her son to be successful in school by moving forward and learning a variety of skills. Rhonda wants her son to be more conscientious about his surrounding and a productive member of the community. Rhonda has many goals for him in life and recognizes her own mortality. It is very important to Rhonda for her son to be comfortable in the community and talk to others without being judged by strangers who think he has mental problems or is not smart. It is very frustrating and hurts Rhonda deeply that many people are ignorant about people with disabilities. Rhonda is happy that her son's teacher is there for her son and helps him to meet his goals. She went on to say that her son can be stubborn, but he learns quickly. Rhonda utilizes texts, notes, and phone calls to communicate with her son's teacher.

What is the school involvement of parents of special education adult students (R2)? Rhonda communicates with the teacher regularly about her son's education and life at school. Rhonda is actively involved in the IEP process and believes her input is valued. Rhonda participates in her son's education because it is her right and obligation as a parent. She is very proud that her son arrives at school on time and attends school daily to get a good education.

What do parents of special education adult students believe is important in order to build positive relationships between home and school (R3)? Rhonda reiterated how important it is to her for the teacher to be there for her son to help him achieve his goals. It is important to Rhonda that her son participates in the Workability

Program which provides a paid job for him. She believes the job teaches him how to earn money and provides opportunities to interact with patrons when they ask him for help. Rhonda stated that providing opportunities such as the Workability Program builds positive relationships between home and school. She is very proud of her son regarding his job and the progress he has made with his social skills. Rhonda believes her son has the necessary school services he needs already provided to him.

Interview 3

Brenda is the parent of an adult female student who is currently 19 years of age. Brenda is an immigrant from the Philippines, recently widowed, and has a younger daughter who is a special education student as well. Brenda works as a Quality Control Technician for a large company.

What are the expectations of parents of special education adult students regarding their child's education (R1)? Brenda expects the teacher to provide an appropriate education for her daughter and wants what is the best for her daughter. Brenda believes the teacher is already meeting her expectations.

What is the school involvement of parents of special education adult students (R2)? Brenda and the teacher communicate regularly via text messages, notes home, phone calls, and face to face meetings. She is involved in the IEP process, asks questions for clarity, and provides input on her daughter's abilities and goals.

What do parent of special education adult students believe is important in order to build positive relationships between home and school (R3)? Brenda

believes communication with the teacher is very important and appreciates the teacher clarifying things when there are language barriers. Brenda visits the classroom when she can, and always offers to purchase supplies for the classroom. She believes her daughter is already provided all available services.

Summary

Chapter 4 provided an analysis of the data collected in relation to each research question. Chapter 5 will provide a summary, explore themes, and give recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the educational expectations of parents of severely handicapped adult students. The data are based on the interviews of three parents of severely handicapped students that attend a school structured to prepare severely handicapped adults to live as independently as possible after aging out of the program at 22 years of age. This chapter provides a summary of the interviews as they relate to each research question.

Summary

Three research questions were prepared: (1) what are the expectations of parents of special education adult students regarding their child's education; (2) what is the school involvement of parents of special education adult students; (3) what do parents of special education adult students believe is important in order to build positive relationships between home and school? The following sections summarize the findings from the interviews that were based on the research questions.

What Are the Expectations of Parents of Special Education Adult Students Regarding Their Child's Education (R1)?

All three parents agree learning and wanting to learn, success in community, interactions with peers, and successful communication are most

important in their children's education. All three parents are aware their children will never be able to live independently due to severe disabilities. However, the parents do expect their children to be as independent as possible, especially in self-care, communication, and holding a part-time job when they age out of school at 22 years of age. The parents expect teachers to help prepare their children for successful completion of school.

Parents agree that community is very important for their children to experience and would like to see them more readily accepted without judgement. Additional concerns of parents included safety and awareness of their surroundings when their children are in the community. One parent would like to see more services available after school for students with special needs including respite and clubs.

Text messaging was unanimous among the parents as the number one way of communication, followed by phone calls and meetings to discuss simple questions and have conversations with their students' teachers. All parents want to be contacted by the teacher when their children are not feeling well, to set meetings, and to contribute additional funds in their children's "outing account." All parents agreed that communication with the teacher on a regular basis to simply check on how their children are doing builds a strong relationship with the teacher and keeps lines of communication open.

What Is the School Involvement of Parents of Special Education Adult Children (R2)?

Involvement in the IEP process and communication with the teacher were the most common ways parents are involved in their children's education. Parents volunteer for fieldtrips and work with the teacher to help their children generalize knowledge gained between home and school. Parents also purchase supplies for the classroom as a way of being involved.

What Do Parents of Special Education Adult Students Believe Is Important in Order to Build Positive Relationships Between Home and School (R3)?

All three parents agree that communication is the most effective way to build positive relationships between home and school. Parents stated the teacher being there, helping children achieve their goals, and being successful builds positive relationships between home and school.

All parents are aware of services such as Speech and Language, Adaptive Physical Education, and Assistive Technology. Also, the work program builds a positive relationship between home and school. All parents believe the work program teaches their children how to earn money, gives them opportunities to purchase items they want, and allows them to interact with others. Parents appreciate the free summer breakfast and lunch program and would welcome after school programs, respite, and clubs for their children. Parents also suggested that their children would benefit from an "all abilities" park.

Themes

What Are the Expectations of Parents of Special Education Adult

Students Regarding Their Child's Education (R1)?

All three parents expect open communication with their children's teacher and for the teacher to help their children grow, achieve their goals, and be successful.

Parents want their children to become comfortable in the community, learn how to function to the best of their abilities, and hold paid jobs.

What Is the School Involvement of Parents of Special Education Adult Children (R2)?

All three parents are involved in their children's education by participating in the IEP process. Parents are very supportive in terms of volunteering in the classroom and on outings and purchasing and donating classroom supplies. Parents enjoy spending time with the class and interacting with the teacher, staff, and students.

What Do Parents of Special Education Adult Students Believe Is Important in Order to Build Positive Relationships Between Home and School (R3)?

All parents agree that communication is paramount in building positive relationships.

Implications

All parents expect their child's education to include time spent in the community. Parents are concerned that people who have not had exposure to those with special needs may perceive their children as having a mental illness rather than

a disability while out in the community. Parents are also aware their children will more than likely out live them and want their children to be as independent as possible, and therefore, expect their children to learn self-advocacy and job and life skills.

Although there have been great strides for the acceptance and integration of people with special needs, only time and exposure can yield further change in the community.

Parents who prefer more frequent communication are typically more involved in their child's education than parents who communicate only when needed. One parent stated that parents need one-on-one communication with the teacher to truly be involved in their child's education. This statement aligns with the findings in a study completed by Fishman and Nickerson (2017) which linked communication between parents and teachers to parental motivation to be more involved in their child's education. Murray, Handyside, Straka, and Arton-Titus (2013) found parents are much more inclined to be involved in their child's education when they believe they can make a difference.

Communication between the teacher and parents fosters parent involvement (Rodriguez, Blatz, & Elbaum, 2014). Therefore, teachers need to be more cognizant and diligently encourage parent participation through communication, invitations to participate in outings, and involvement in the classroom. Parents agreed there is a need for more services including after school programs, clubs, and respite which would further build positive relationships between home and school.

Recommendations for Future Study

1. Conduct a quantitative study to ascertain the consistency of teacher- initiated communication throughout the education process, preschool through age 22.
2. Conduct a qualitative study to determine the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding effective ways to educate people about those with special needs.
3. Expand the current study to include a larger representative sample population of parents/guardians to ascertain viewpoints from various regions.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW QUESTION MATRIX

Interview Questions	R1	R2	R3
R1. What are the expectations of parents of special education adult students regarding their child's education?	X		
1. Describe the most optimal education your child can receive within the boundaries of his/her ability.	X		
2. Describe what you believe the teacher can do for your child.	X		
3. What is the frequency and methods of communication (communication book, phone, email, text, in person meetings) you wish to have with your child's teacher regarding simple educational questions and conversations?	X		
R2. What is the school involvement of parents of special education adult children?		X	
1. Are you actively involved in the IEP process including suggestions, requests, questions, and stating your expectations?		X	
2. Do you believe you can make a difference in your child's education by becoming more involved?		X	
3. How are you involved with your child's education at school?		X	
R3. What do parents of special education adult students believe is important in order to build positive relationships between home and school?			X
1. What school services do you believe have helped to build positive relationships between home and school such as workshops, publications, and access to specialists?			X
2. What services help to build a positive relationship between home and school that are not available at your child's school but you would like to use?			X

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I am asking for your volunteer participation in a study that I am conducting as part of the fulfillment of my Master's degree at California State University, Stanislaus. The purpose of this qualitative study is to determine the perceptions and opinions of parents of severely handicapped students regarding the expectations of their child's education.

As part of the data collection, I will ask questions regarding your experience with teachers, your involvement, and positive relationships between home and school. Interviews will be done individually in order to maintain confidentiality and support a comfortable environment. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes of your time and you may withdraw or refuse to answer any question at any time without consequence. The interview will be audiotaped and transcribed to secure and represent your responses accurately. There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study. The information you provide will be protected from all inappropriate disclosure under the law. Your name and all other forms of identifiable information will not appear in this study.

The information that is gained will be used for education purposes. Only this researcher will have access to the information collected that will be destroyed three years after the study. If you agree to participate, please sign below. If you have any questions about this research, please contact me, Rebecca Shaw at (209) 570-1598 or my supervising professor, Dr. John Borba, at (209) 667-3260. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the CSU Stanislaus Institutional Review Board at (209) 667-3493 and/or the Compliance Office at (209) 667-3351. By signing below, you agree that you have read the information described above and agree to participate in this study.

Name of Participant (Please Print)

Signature of Participant

Date
