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# One Size Does Not Fit All: Facilitating Parental Involvement in the Special Education System

By Kelly Green

## Abstract

The lack of parental involvement in the special education system has been a topic of interest in research for many years. Despite decades of federal legislation, research suggests that many parents in the special education system are dissatisfied with the ability of educational professionals in understanding the needs of students with disabilities. Further, research shows that many parents feel disenfranchised from decisions made about their children in the special education system. The purpose of this review is to examine the core issues in existing approaches to facilitating parental involvement, the possible solutions to these problems, and the new approaches that could unite parents and professionals to collaborate for student success.

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Facilitating parental involvement in the special education system has been a goal for professionals for many years. Federal legislation mandates parental involvement in special education; however, research shows that parents still feel excluded in the special education process and unsatisfied with their experiences. The following review of the literature confirms that approaches to facilitating parental involvement do not address the central causes of the discord between parents and professionals in the special education system, discusses what these problems are and general solutions, and concludes that strategies to involve parents in the process must address new approaches to collaboration in order to garner active parental participation in the special educational system.

## Literature Review

Recent research addresses some of the causes of parental dissatisfaction and overall unresponsive attitude toward the special education system. Mandic, Rudd, Hehir, and Acevedo-Garcia (2010) note that parents of students with disabilities often struggle with involvement in their child's education for multiple reasons. The authors suggest that inflexible work schedules, lack of paid leave, parent literacy deficits and language barriers, and cultural unresponsiveness are some of the factors that contribute to the lack of parental involvement in special education services for their child. While procedural safeguards are meant to protect the rights of families, Mandic emphasizes that the readability of these documents are markedly excessive. The 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) estimates that 37.5% of adults aged 25 to 49 are reading at the basic or below basic reading level and the level of readability of the safeguards would cause these parents significant difficulty. The authors also point out that based on the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 [NLTS-2], (2003) and the Special Education Elementary Longitudinal Study [SEELS], 2006), "parents of students with disabilities are more likely to have limited literacy than the general population." These limitations make it extremely difficult for parents to involve themselves in the special education process and support their children with interventions.

Parents may require leveled support, just as students do. Burke (2013) offers advocacy training as a potential solution to the lack of parental involvement in the special education system. Advocacy training may provide an opportunity for parents to become active stakeholders in their child's education. Burke cites Public Agenda

(2002) with the alarming statistic that among parents with children with disabilities, a total of 70% believe that their child loses services because of their lack of knowledge about their rights. The author identifies barriers to parental involvement as parents' feelings of inadequacy and ineffective procedural safeguards. The research states that parents are often unable to voice their dissatisfaction with the special education process and how it meets the needs of their child. In relation to the procedural safeguards, the author suggests that even if a parent wanted to know their rights, the document is inaccessible due to its lack of readability. Burke cites Mandic et al. (2010) in stating that the average reading level of procedural safeguards across the country are written at the college level (55%). Mandic estimates that 39% of safeguards are written at the graduate school reading level, and a mere 6% are written at the high school level. Due to the inaccessibility of procedural safeguards as a useful tool to support parents and the feelings of ineptitude that parents face within the special education system, Burke proposes two models for training special education advocates. Both models rely on special education volunteers.

In Burke's estimation, one of the issues in special education is the limited research of the effect of parental involvement on the achievement of students with disabilities. She cites one of the barriers to this field of research as the absence of standardized measures to evaluate the relationship. Similarly, Chen and Gregory (2010) discuss the lack of studies on the relationship between schooling outcomes of children with disabilities and parental involvement or a home-school connection. The author speculates that parental involvement in the prereferral process (initial stages of intervention for students having academic, behavioral, or attendance difficulties) would be appreciated by educators and professionals but cites a lack of research to support this assertion. The research conducted by Chen supports the idea that parental involvement in the prereferral process for special education services was a larger marker for successful alignment to the intervention than race or gender. Further, the author cites results of the study that show a correlational relationship between parental attendance at prereferral meetings and a reduced rate of referral for special education evaluation testing. Chen states that, "Parent advocacy is the only possible mechanism that may explain these results." Based on the research, facilitating parental involvement in the special education system may be more powerful than any other approach to increase the success of students with disabilities and parent satisfaction with the special education process.

It is imperative to consider the impact that location has on the involvement of parents in the special education process. Starr and Foy (2010) discuss that even though the approach to servicing students with special needs varies from country to country, there are trends in parental satisfaction regarding the ability of educational professionals to manage the behavior and understand the needs of students with disabilities. Importantly, there is dissatisfaction in parent and school communication and collaboration. Whether parents live in regions such as in Britain (where many students with autism attend specialized schools) or in the United States (where inclusion is the preferred placement for students with disabilities) across the board parents are disenchanted with the services and support they receive as a family. The study highlighted the response of a particular parent that felt her child was a source of resentment, initially for the teacher and then for the parents of other children that felt it was unfair for the teacher's extra time and resources to be used to address the behavioral needs of the child. The authors, based on qualitative data, present the parents' perspective that the lack of relevant professional development and training in the field of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) consistently had a negative effect on their child's education. Contrastingly, when parents had positive perceptions about the educational programming of their child with ASD, they often credited the training and professional

development of the instructional staff as the reason. Further, the authors emphasize the importance of trust between the families of students with ASD and the instructional staff that services the student.

An important consideration is the effect that the severity of a disability has on parental involvement and satisfaction of services. Brown, Ouellette-Kuntz, Hunter, Kelley, Cobigo, and Lam (2010) sought to conduct such research by determining the relationship between a child with autism's functional independence and the unmet needs of the parent. The authors define needs as a range of educational, medical, and social supports and services. Based on the results of the study, the authors found that parents of children with high functional independence had a reduced rate of unmet needs. Parents of children with low functional independence had the highest level of unmet needs. As compared with families of children with moderate functional independence, these families had a significantly increased risk for unmet needs. Based on the results of the study, the authors suggest that the continuum of services should be adjusted based on the specific needs of the child and the family.

Based on the needs for improvement in facilitating parental involvement, new approaches should be considered. In response to the overwhelming need for collaboration and facilitation in special education, Meadan, Shelden, Appel, and DeCrazia (2010) emphasize the idea of coupling the individual education plan, or IEP (which is referred to as a short term goal) with a person-centered plan, or PCP (which is referred to as a long term plan). The authors state that currently the special education system uses a systems-centered approach, meaning that the focus is put on the proper placement of the person with a disability into the special education system and hones in on the educational needs of the individual learner. A person-centered approach to planning includes a team of individuals that are focused on the "hopes, concerns, and dreams of individuals with disabilities and their families," and is put together prior to the IEP to help shape the educational planning in order to correlate with the long-term vision for the student and their family. Approaches such as a PCP allow families to collaborate with professionals about the decisions made regarding their children. There are many approaches to PCP and data suggests that when PCP's are put into place, parents feel that their needs are met and that they are supported as well as the child.

As far back as 1975 when the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was enacted by Congress, efforts have been made to increase collaboration with parents in special education. Wells and Sheehy (2012) note that while IDEA was meant to ensure services to children with disabilities and involve parents in the process, the involvement of parents is far from ideal. The authors assert that parental involvement in special education practices is passive in nature, which may stem from a lack of awareness of the special education system, the minimal input parents are able to provide based on cultural, language, and socioeconomic barriers, and the incomprehensibility of the process of interventions and supports. The authors suggest that models such as person-centered planning (PCP) would increase parental involvement and collaboration for all team members. Some of the strategies discussed involve including peers in the planning process, low-tech collaboration during the meeting (using post-it notes to collaborate), creating an informal environment by choosing a location outside of the school setting, and scheduling follow-up contact with the team. Team facilitators include questions about the student with disabilities such as, "What would the person's ideal day look like?" and "What supports could be provided to the family to facilitate success for the student?" The authors emphasize that a person-centered plan allows the parent's beliefs and hopes for the child to come to fruition and guide the special education teachers and team to plan educationally relevant, meaningful

instruction for the child and their family. Strategies such as these ensure that parents play an active role in the education of their child.

This literature review supports the need to consider new approaches to facilitating parental involvement in the special education system. Cultural, language, and socioeconomic barriers, as well as the incomprehensibility of the process of interventions and supports hinder parental involvement. Solutions to removing these barriers include involving families in new and unique ways that address the beliefs and ideals of the family as a whole. A person-centered planning approach should be considered in order to adequately address the varying levels of need for families. Using the person-centered planning approach provides the family with a long-term goal for their child, allowing for increased achievement and overall satisfaction with the special education system.

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## About the Author

Kelly Green is a full-time Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Coordinator and teacher at a Title I elementary school in Boca Raton, Florida. Her experience as a parent of a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and as a professional in the field pushed her to pursue further education at Florida International University. She will complete the Master's program in Special Education with an endorsement in ASD (projected August 2018). She has a wonderful husband, three beautiful children, ages 13, 11, and 8, and an adorable puppy. While her hobbies include reading, listening to music, and spending time at the beach, as a mom she also dabbles in 'side' hobbies like hula hooping, blowing bubbles, and learning how to play Minecraft. She considers parental involvement the cornerstone of her ESE program at the elementary level.!



# How the Student's Culture Can Affect the Education and Services Provided to Students with Disabilities: A Review of the Literature

By Jaclyn Sachs

## Introduction

The student's culture can affect the education and services provided to students with disabilities. It's so very important to examine this topic. There are several minority students in special education. According to Ford (2012), dissimilarities in beliefs, values, customs, as well as traditions among White teachers and their racially, ethnically, and linguistically different (RELD) students add to deficit thinking and low expectations. There also exist cultural clashes as well as cultural misunderstandings. These attitudes do develop in unwarranted referrals for special education evaluation and services. Additionally, minority students are examined and treated as if they are a homogenous group. The histories and backgrounds of the RELD groups (Hispanic, African American, Asian, and Native American) and numerous subgroups in the United States and schools are examined in generic terms rather than in specific terms (Ford, 2012). Additionally, inadequate and inappropriate referral, assessment, and evaluation procedures used either to refer students for possible inclusion in special education, or to decide their placement in special education, add largely to the large numbers of minority students in these programs.

The topic of disproportionality continues to be an important topic among educators. There are many factors that contribute to disproportionality. Some of these factors include the following: test bias, unequal education opportunities, classroom behavior management, and cultural mismatch. Culturally responsive teaching is very important to examine as well. To be specific, culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogy that notices the importance of including students' cultural references in all facets of learning. It's a student-centered approach to teaching in which the students' individual strengths are recognized and cared for to help student achievement. Culturally responsive practices in schools and classrooms have demonstrated to be a beneficial means of addressing the disproportionate representation of racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse students in programs serving students with special needs (Griner & Stewart, 2013).

## Perspectives on specific suggestions or findings

Regarding disproportionality, recent research contributes clear evidence that it is, in fact, an issue that must be focused on as we seek to establish that all students are receiving an equitable education (Griner & Stewart, 2013). For instance, students coming from other racially, culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse (RCELD) groups are also overrepresented in the following categories: mild mental retardation (MMR), learning disability (LD), and emotional/behavioral disorder (EBD). Students who are inappropriately placed in these programs can experience several consequences. On identification for programs serving students with special needs, it is probable that this label will stay with students throughout their entire education experience. Some other consequences may include the following: unequal access to the curriculum, decreased expectations, as well as shortage of opportunities to connect with peers that haven't been labeled (Griner & Stewart, 2013).

Furthermore, research on learning disability identification and special education placement in U.S. schools shows that children's demographic characteristics including ethnicity, race, gender, as well as social class affect

their probability of being labeled as disabled and placed in special education. Findings from this "disproportionate placement" literature convey that African Americans, males, as well as children from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds face higher risk of disability diagnosis and special education placement than their peers (Hibel & Jasper, 2012).

There is disproportionate overrepresentation of children who are racial-ethnic minorities. These children are more likely to be exposed to risk factors that hinder academic, cognitive, as well as behavioral functioning, thus increasing the probability that they will be referred for early intervention and/or early childhood special education (EI/ECSE) (Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier, & Maczuga, 2012). Cultural, linguistic, as well as racial bias, which perhaps causes minority children's abilities and behaviors to be considered more open to doubt, is a possible reason. To illustrate an example, certain teachers have sometimes been described to be more likely to refer children who are minorities for special education (Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier, & Maczuga, 2012).

While keeping in mind the overrepresentation, it's very important to examine culturally responsive pedagogy. Understanding students and their various ways of learning is a step toward making teaching culturally relevant (Gimbert, Desai, & Kerka, 2010). Schools and teachers who have embraced a culturally responsive pedagogy have the capability to act as change agents in their schools to help connect the disconnect and encourage more equitable schooling experiences for racially, culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse (RCELD) students (Griner & Stewart, 2013). Culturally responsive pedagogy is so very necessary. First and foremost, culture is so very important to learning. It plays a very important role in not only communicating and grasping information, but also in shaping the thinking process of groups as well as individuals. Culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogy that notices the importance of including students' cultural references in all facets of learning. Moreover, it's important to note how it's a student-centered approach to teaching in which the students' individual strengths are recognized and cared for to help student achievement.

Culturally responsive pedagogy is critical. According to Irvine (2012), engaging and motivating students, choosing and effectively using learning resources, establishing caring relationships with students while continuing high expectations, as well as furthering and learning from family and community engagement is necessary. Additionally, classroom interactions among teacher and students should ideally be respectful and display real warmth and sensitivity to students' cultures. For instance, a research finding about African American students is the significance of effective teacher-student relationships. The research literature emphasizes that caring is associated to high expectations as well as the structured discipline these teachers set in their classrooms (Irvine, 2012).

The IDEA is critical. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) supports U.S. states with funding for coordinated and multidisciplinary systems to provide specialized early intervention services, specifically named early intervention or early childhood special education (EI/ECSE), to all eligible children exhibiting behavioral, cognitive, and/or physical developmental delays or disabilities (Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier, & Maczuga, 2012).

## Recommendations/suggestions

According to the research, as discussed, over-representation occurs due to factors such as teacher bias, poverty, testing bias, cultural bias, as well as institutionalized racism. It's important to be mindful of IDEIA. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 1997, 2004) mandates that school districts



address and correct over-representation through financial sanctions and professional development. Additionally, it's important to be aware of NCLB. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) requires accountability in public education. Schools are required to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP addresses students with disabilities, ESOL students, as well as minority students.

It's so very critical to not minimize fundamental differences among several ethnic and racial groups. Each group has a different history, culture, and way of experiencing schools. To illustrate with a specific example, in general education, special education, and gifted education, African Americans have acquired more attention than other RELD students, maybe because they are experiencing the least amount of school and economic success as a group. Also, what an educator perceives as impolite (e.g. bluntness), a RELD student or parent may not, and misinterpretations of behaviors (e.g. social time perspective, movement, etc.) contribute to classroom management problems and referrals to special education. Moreover, it's very important to keep in mind the following: As with African Americans, Hispanic Americans may not hold the same views of disability as White teachers and families. Their culture-specific behaviors can be misunderstood, leading to unnecessary special education referrals.

Educators can and must decrease the negative outcomes associated with linguistic, racial, and ethnic differences in order to equitably serve students who differ from the status quo and those who teach them. It's incredibly important for educators to be mindful and to work proactively to become culturally competent so as to neither ignore nor negate cultural differences, not misunderstand cultural differences, and not penalize children for their cultural differences. With this it can help to decrease unnecessary referrals, identification, and placement for students.

There are many kinds of student diversity, including the following: linguistic, cultural, that involving exceptionalities, and socioeconomic status. These are four kinds of student diversity. Students come from backgrounds that include a variety of family situations (e.g. adoptive, two-parent, divorced, single-parent, households headed by grandparents or other relatives). First and foremost, every student has his or her own values, beliefs, and customs. Because culturally based behaviors are so ingrained, teachers typically don't realize that tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language can vary across cultures. That's why it's important for a teacher to be culturally responsive. For instance, a teacher can respect and acknowledge various cultural heritages. Second, teachers lead classrooms with a variety of students who may be fluent in English, learning English as a second language, or even bilingual. For instance, it's necessary to note how one in five students in the United States (ages 5-17) speaks a language other than English at home or speaks English with difficulty. Third, almost every general education classroom includes students with exceptionalities. To illustrate an example, students with disabilities (ages 6-17) make up 11% of the total school population. Fourth, just as students will have different cultural backgrounds, speak many languages, as well as have different learning needs, so too will they come from various socioeconomic levels. To illustrate an example, research shows that students from low-SES households face a variety of challenges that can lead to negative educational outcomes. It's important for teachers to keep this in mind and be aware of this.

Teachers who acknowledge a fuller understanding of their students' personal experiences and backgrounds can use them as a tool to make helpful connections for all their students. This is known as culturally responsive teaching. Teachers are culturally responsive when they teach students to understand and appreciate their own and others' cultural heritages. Teachers are also culturally responsive when they acknowledge and respect

various cultural heritages. Third, teachers are culturally responsive when they activate students' prior knowledge as well as connect what they know to what they are learning. Fourth, teachers are culturally responsive when they recognize the strengths and contributions of individuals from historically underrepresented groups. Additionally, it's very helpful to use several instructional techniques (e.g. role-playing exercises, storytelling) that align with the way in which the student is taught in his or her own culture. Moreover, teachers can turn to many sources for more information about cultures, including the following: school district meetings, museums and cultural centers, community events, and more. This can be very beneficial.

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## About the Author

Jaclyn Sachs received her Bachelor in Early Care and Education degree, and graduated magna cum laude. She will graduate with her Master of Science in Special Education degree in August 2017. She is passionate about teaching students with special needs. Her hobbies include biking, walking, and spending time with family and friends.

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# Disproportionality in Special Education: A Review of the Literature

By Norma Samburgo

## Introduction

The degree in which the student's demographics, such as ethnicity, culture, race, gender, or social class, affects the likelihood of being placed in special education is called disproportionality. Racially, culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students in U.S. are either overrepresented in special education or underrepresented in gifted programs. For instance, African American students are overrepresented in the categories of mild mental retardation and severely emotionally disturbed (Griner et al., 2012) and according to the U.S. Department of Education, they account for 20% of the special education population even though African American students only represent 14.8 % of the U.S. school age population (Irvine, 2012). Similarly, children of immigrants are also overrepresented in special education, especially in the category of learning disability (LD). The theory behind this, is that immigrants usually face social and economic difficulties when they arrive to U.S. with the addition of limited English proficiency, characteristic that place their children in a difficult position since U.S. schools put emphasis in learning English. According to Shin and Kiminski (2010), 26 % of the U.S. school population in 2007 spoke other languages than English and this situation is expected to increase.

For this reason, U.S. public schools must take English as a second language services as a priority before they considered special education services (Hibel & Jasper, 2012)

As a result, many of those students who are disproportionally placed in special education carry their "special needs label" during their complete school years. Moreover, they might be exposed to less educational expectations, differentiated curriculum, and fewer chances to relate with peers who belong to general education classrooms.

Likewise, students who belong to minority groups, or in other words racially, culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students (RCELD) and with low socio-economic status, may be also represented disproportionally in early intervention programs and early childhood special education (EI/ECSE) (Morgan et al., 2014). Theoretically, the reason of the overrepresentation is that children from minorities' families are more exposed to risk factors that could damage their cognitive and behavioral abilities. Other reason is the cultural bias many teachers show while considering students from minorities to be "more problematic". Contrary, minority children may also be underrepresented because of cultural differences in accepting disability since many cultures have different attitudes toward disabilities and do not identify problematic behaviors and other signs as delays. In addition, because of the diminution of access to health care among children of minorities' families, there is a delay in evaluations, and in consequence, a decrease in early intervention or early childhood special education services. Notably are the benefits of early intervention programs: Children display better academic successes, finish high school, and are less expected to use drugs or be depressed (Morgan et al., 2014).

Many researchers agree in that culturally responsive teaching practices in schools and classrooms are the key to address disproportionality in the special education placement of racially, culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students (RCELD). In order to create a tool that can be used by teachers, school staff, and other stakeholders, Griner and Stewart, 2012, conducted a study using different models of culturally responsive

teaching practice. The first model was created by Fiedler et al. (2008) by using a checklist of practices that focus groups analyzed to determine what practices were appropriate. The expert review model used a snowball sample procedure where the participants were asked to provide recommendations to address the needs of the racially, culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students. Another model followed by Griner and Stewart was The Delphi Study where emails and online surveys were sent to evaluate the feasibility and importance of the Culturally Responsive Practice (CRT) they designed. Finally, they added quantitative and qualitative studies with teachers, administrators, and support personnel to further investigate the impact of CRT practices in schools. The findings of this study showed that schools and teachers who are supported by the use of culturally responsive instruments, are able to address the disproportionality of minorities in special education.

Irvine (2012) addresses the need to incorporate culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) in the preparation of special educators. Diverse students carry to school their cultures, beliefs, and behaviors and they could benefit if teachers are prepared to connect instruction to the students' backgrounds. In the case of African American students, many teachers who are not instructed in CRP do not take in consideration the upbringing knowledge and different learning styles the students have and make the mistake to misdiagnose and over-refer to special education. Promoting high standards, producing caring relationships, engaging students, using appropriate learning materials, as well as engaging family and community are strategies that should be included in the preparation of special education teachers.

In their study, Hibel and Jasper (2012) examined the disproportionate representation of children of immigrants in special education by analyzing the language spoken at home, immigration status according to generation, participation in ESL classes, and the age and grade level of the students. Educators usually postpone the evaluation for placement in special education until the students are proficient in English. Schools often use ESL services during the first years of elementary education and, as a consequence, the possibilities of children of immigrants being placed in special education are diminished. However, this situation decreases as the students start upper levels, especially fifth grade where there is a particularly over-representation of students placed in special education.

Morgan, et al., 2012, conducted an investigation to determine the extent in which students from minorities are affected in the provision of early intervention (EI) and early childhood special education services (ECSE). They examined 7,950 cases of 48 months old children with and without disabilities with the purpose of determining the disproportionality in EI/ECSE based on race/ ethnicity. The investigators analyzed four factors: 1. Sociodemographic characteristics (gender, socio-economic status, maternal age, language, etc.), 2. Characteristics of gestation and birth, 3. Academic knowledge and behaviors, and 4. Health care services. After evaluating the results, they conclude that 48 month-old children who are Black, Hispanic, or Asian are underrepresented in EI/ECSE programs, and they found some reasons for this situation, for instance, the disproportionality in disability diagnosis in children who come from families with a low socio-economic status.

In a similar investigation Morgan et al., (2015), explored the disproportionality, either under or over-representation, of children in elementary and middle school from minorities in U.S. Hispanic, non-Hispanic Black, non-Hispanic White, and other race/ ethnicity such as Asian, American Indian, and Alaskan Native. They analyzed specifically the following disabilities: learning disability, speech or language impairment, mental retardation, health impairment, and emotional disturbance. Unexpectedly, after analyzing the results, the

investigators could not find evidence of disproportionality representation in special education. Children from racial, ethnic, or language minorities in the U.S.

In conclusion, disproportionality of minorities based on race, ethnicity, culture, and language, is a topic that must be address by teachers, schools, and stakeholders in order to provide every student in U.S. with an equitable education. Culturally responsive pedagogy practices should be adopted by every educator to ensure access to the general curriculum to children from other cultures, races, ethnicities, and who are in the process of learning English. Before considering an evaluation for special education, teachers and school should provide a mean for the students to have opportunities to demonstrate what they know in the best way they know how. More research should be conducted not in disproportionality but in how teachers are prepared and use a culturally responsive pedagogy approach with students that come from minorities.

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# Improving Multicultural Parental Involvement through Cultural Responsiveness and Advocacy

By Lisa-Stephanie Valme

## Abstract

Regarding the United States educational system, immigrant parents and students have been found to be at quite an unjust disadvantage in terms of parental involvement in school systems and the disproportional representation of multicultural students in exceptional education programs. The literature review focuses on the benefits and consequences of multicultural parental participation in the school system, immigrant advocacy for their children with disabilities, and the disproportional rate of immigrant students in inappropriate programs. While emphasizing the use of cultural responsiveness in hopes of effectively addressing the bridge between school and home cultures, it was found that these practices could also potentially elicit a greater immigrant parental and family involvement and advocacy in schools, while decreasing the unjust placement of students in inappropriate programs.

The origination of the United States by the Western World was certainly built upon the concept of immigration through colonization and discoveries. In fact, throughout time, the United States has also attracted an increasing amount of immigrants, with over 1,051, 031 recent permanent resident statuses being obtained and recorded through the Office of Immigration Statistics in 2016. With that being said, the incoming immigrants are also diverse in terms of language, national origin, race, ethnicity, and socio-economic-status (Turney & Kao, 2009). Nevertheless, despite their differences, many immigrant parents and children face similar hindrances and experiences in terms of navigating through the school system and interacting with teachers (Turney & Kao, 2009).

## Educational Inequalities and Exceptional Student Education

Over the years, many injustices that specifically affect immigrant minority groups have been completely visible to lawmakers and civilians in terms of social, political, and economic equality. However, despite the severe outcomes of these injustices, certain details lack appropriate attention, such as the many inequalities that continue to affect our education system. More precisely, the inequitable distribution of resources, parental communication and participation barriers, and the disproportional representation of racially, culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students in programs serving students with special needs continues to not only negatively affect students of minority groups, but also continues to build the divide between school and home cultures (Griner & Stewart, 2012).

**Disproportional Representation of Minority Students in Exceptional Student Education Programs**  
Disproportional representations typically refer to the extent to which belonging in a specific cultural group affects the probability of being placed in a special education disability program (Griner & Stewart, 2012). More precisely, research has shown that an increasing amount of immigrant students in school face a rising risk of being placed in special education intervention services as the school years progress (Hibel & Jasper, 2012). In fact, this issue is so outstanding, that the reauthorization of the IDEA legislation in 2004 had to include amendments stating that local education agencies would have to provide additional academic services to members of over-identified groups (Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeir, & Maczuga, 2012). Furthermore, the



educational and exceptional student education system in the United States has demonstrated the tendency to favor children from English-speaking families with familiar cultures and beliefs (Morgan et al., 2012). Due to the unintended bias apparent in the educational system, it is crucial to note that the continuing inappropriate placement of students who do not have disabilities into exceptional student education programs is becoming a major policy concern as well. More precisely, according to Hibell and Jasper (2012), erroneously identifying students with disabilities and improperly placing them into exceptional student education programs is indubitably an example of equal opportunity denial.

More accurately, research has shown that immigrant families often face social and economic disadvantages, including limited English speaking proficiency and fewer financial resources (Hibell & Jasper, 2012). In fact, as schools in United States classrooms and curriculums tend to normalize white middle-class culture, it is more likely for teachers to unintentionally form biased beliefs and perceptions that have positive correlations with student placements in exceptional student education programs (Hibell & Jasper, 2012). Additionally, as many students who are now attending schools in the United States are less familiar with the English language, certain school professionals have difficulties determining if students' academic struggles are based on limited English proficiency or learning disabilities (Hibell & Jasper, 2012).

It is thus crucial to note that minority students who are underrepresented in gifted programs and overrepresented in special education programs may potentially suffer negative consequences. Students affected by the educational system bias will not only have an unequal access to the curriculum, but they will also have less opportunities of connecting with their peers, and they will carry the inappropriate label that was given to them upon entering the program (Griner & Stewart, 2012). Moreover, many immigrant students are also faced with hindrances regarding building connections for learning with their teachers. The growing divide between students and their teachers due to cultural differences and bias can also stem negative learning experiences for minority students (Griner & Stewart, 2012). This divide also acts as a barrier for immigrant students to adapt to their school community and in teacher expectations, which typically leads to their inappropriate placement in special education program, ultimately obstructing positive learning experiences and outcomes (Griner & Stewart, 2012). As a result, in order to prevent the disproportional representation of immigrant students in special education programs to increase, educators now have the important role of representing their students, communicating with their parents, and guarding against the inaccurate placement that has negatively affected minority students for decades (Hibell & Jasper, 2012).

## Barriers to Parental Involvement

The "Strong Families, Strong Schools" report has persistently shown that greater parental and family involvement in children's learning experiences lead to higher quality education and safer learning environments (Burke, 2013). Additionally, parental involvement also socializes children, provides stronger connections with teachers and administrators, and is ultimately linked to academic and behavioral success in children attending primary school (Turney & Kao, 2009). Regarding special education services, parental collaborations with schools tend to provide children with better interventions, and more of a guarantee that the IDEA requirements will be met (Burke, 2013). Ultimately family participation with schools provides families with more weight in determining interventions and securing appropriate services for their children (Burke, 2013).

Even though parental involvement is incredibly fundamental and beneficial in student educational experiences, many existing barriers and challenges make it exceptionally difficult for immigrant families to participate. More precisely, immigrant parents face challenges associated with language barriers and unfamiliarity with the American culture and educational system, in addition to the little number of opportunities and resources that are made available to them compared to that of native-born White parents (Turney & Kao, 2009). Immigrant parents also find it difficult to participate in their children's school activities due to transportation struggles, inconvenient meeting times, safety, unwelcoming sentiments from their child's schools, work hours, and child care (Turney & Kao, 2009). Thus, minority parents have indeed reported more barriers to participating in their child's schools, consequently also being less likely to be involved (Turney & Tao, 2009). With all of the advantages that follow parental involvement in their children's learning experiences, in order to truly benefit immigrant students, it is exceptionally important for teachers and administrators to welcome and encourage multicultural family participation in their activities. Perhaps, if educational institutions were to collaborate more with immigrant families, the disproportional representation of immigrant students in special education programs might also decrease.

## Parental Involvement in Exceptional Student Education

Given that linguistically and culturally diverse parents and students already face a multitude of complications and barriers regarding the American school system, it is increasingly more difficult for these parents to also navigate the special education system in the United States. More precisely, persisting challenges that make involvement and disability advocacy difficult for immigrant parents include language barriers regarding difficult questions, challenging authority, transportation and child care issues in attending Individualized Educational Program (IEP) meetings, timely convenience of IEP meetings, intimidation caused by large school systems, and inaccessible procedural safeguards (Burker, 2013). It seems that the majority of parents have claimed the lack of meaningful participation in IEP meetings due to the inequalities and bias present in IEP teams (Burke, 2013). This cultural divide can potentially affect the type of services that a minority student with disabilities can receive, in addition to the potential of inappropriately placing an immigrant student in special education programs (Griner, Stewart, 2012).

## Using Culturally Responsive Means to Build Parental Involvement in Exceptional Student Education Programs

In order to overcome cultural barriers that immigrant parents and students face while adapting to the educational system in the United States, educators and school staff members should implement culturally responsive practices. More precisely, as quoted by Griner and Stewart (2012), those who employ culturally responsive pedagogies are capable of acting as agents of change in order to encourage more positive learning experiences for culturally diverse students. These practices are also effective in terms of addressing cultural divides, achievement gaps, and disproportional representation of students in special education programs (Griner & Stewart, 2012).

Culturally responsive teaching techniques typically involve using a student's cultural knowledge, experiences, and beliefs throughout their educational experience in order to make learning experiences more relevant and effective (Griner & Stewart, 2012). These teaching methods acknowledge the validity and meaningfulness of different cultural groups, while bridging the gap between home and school experiences. More accurately, cultural responsiveness encourages students to learn about and praise each other's cultural heritages, in

addition to incorporating multicultural information, resources, and materials in the classroom (Griner & Stewart, 2012). It is recommended for instructors to include the opinions and experiences of parents, community members, and cultural experts in order to truly understand the needs of their students, in addition to aid in representing their students (Griner & Stewart, 2012). Cultural responsiveness should in fact encourage all individuals involved in the school system, parents, community members, and students to empower their community and address the needs of their student population in schools.

## Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Parental Involvement

Many movements simply begin in classrooms, more precisely, teachers should be able to acknowledge and encourage student cultures and beliefs in order to teach more effectively. Teachers should also make appropriate learning opportunities available to all of their students by working to eliminate bias through this self-reflective practice. Teachers should also be educated about family needs, and cultures, and specialized teachers should have appropriate training and knowledge of different disabilities as well (Starr & Foy, 2010). Teachers and school staff members who are aware of culturally responsive practices can potentially address the cultural divide between school and home, and disproportional representation of minority students in special education programs (Griner & Stewart, 2012). Educators and community members should continue to adapt and change to cater to the needs of schools, classrooms and individual students and families, which will ultimately build stronger communities and increase academic success among immigrant students (Griner & Stewart, 2012).

On the other hand, in order to encourage multicultural family participations in both typical school programs and exceptional student education programs, school staff members can reach out to their student's families and community members (Griner & Stewart, 2012). Effective activities and events to tie in family and community members to participate in school activities include school conferences and meetings, increase in communication via agendas or telephone, class newsletters, bulletin boards, informative e-mails, family nights, exhibit nights, and shared celebrations of birthdays and holidays. Visible efforts from school administrators and educators could also extract more representative involvement from immigrant parents (Griner & Stewart, 2012), which can potentially also stem a rise in effective disability advocacy for their children as well. Regarding special education placements and programs, educators and school staff members should also respond in culturally responsive means, as stronger ties with students and their families can lead to an increase in parent advocacy and support as well (Burke, 2013). In order to improve multicultural parental involvement in exceptional student education programs, educators must not only aid parents in securing appropriate educational services for their children, but they must also reflect on their practice in order to secure the inclusion of all of their students in the classroom (Burker, 2013).

It is crucial for educators to acknowledge and appreciate different cultures and perspectives in order to truly benefit their students and communities. The slightest change in attitude can lead to an incredible difference in a child's future, thus educators must be sure to respond to their students and their families in just and appropriate ways. While practicing culturally responsive techniques in the classroom and throughout the community, educators and school staff members would be able to potentially elicit parental participation in typical and special education programs, thus with more support, students with and without disabilities would be more likely to be provided with appropriate services and greater opportunities in succeeding in academic and social endeavors.

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## About the Author

Lisa-Stephanie Valme is currently obtaining her MS in Exceptional Student Education while teaching in Miami Dade County. Ms. Valme is completely devoted in positively impacting the educational, developmental, and recreational needs and experiences of all individuals with specializations in instruction, culture, special education advocacy, and recreational expressive techniques. Having had fulfilling experiences in teaching, with aspirations relating to art therapy Ms. Valme certainly hopes to continue her academic endeavors in the future.

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# **Not Being Left Behind: Ensuring Equal Access to Education for Students with Disabilities: A Review of the Literature**

By Christine Williams

## **Equal Access for Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities can face many challenges when attempting to navigate the educational system. The No Child Left Behind Act 2001 and Individual with Disabilities Improvement Education Act 1975 provide legal mandates that require all students equal access to a free public education, irrespective of any needs they may have. Theoretically, this should be the case, but in reality, there are many obstacles students and their families can face when striving to achieve this goal, especially for children with disabilities.

## **Cultural Diversity**

Researchers have identified specific areas that can affect a child's access to equal education. One such area is cultural diversity. Irvine (2012) focused on the relationship between multicultural education and special education, looking closely at for example, cultural misunderstandings, the home school connections and how this impacted the educational experiences of students with disabilities. Irvine (2012) referred to the process of identification of students with disabilities and the fact that, "racial disparities in the classification of disabled students begin at the stage of initial classroom referral" (Irvine, 2012, p.269). Irvine believed that teacher judgement and pre-conceived views played a major part in the teacher's viewpoint of the student's identification (Irvine, 2012, p.269). Such viewpoints can have an adverse effect on the diagnosis of a student, if, for example, the teachers or other professionals do not have a clear or full understanding of the family's background. If the teacher or professional has a fixed mindset, which Dweck (2006) defined as a belief that 'your qualities are carved in stone' (Dweck, 2006, p.6), the belief held may be that the family's circumstances are the reason for the child's situation and there is little that can be done to change it. Irvine (2012) also referred to issue of tensions between and school, which can also manifest due to the teacher's misunderstanding and/or the family's own misconceived ideas and suspicions surrounding the educational system, which may culminate from their respective cultural backgrounds and viewpoints (Irvine, 2012, p.269). This could also be attributed to the teacher's fixed mindset of the situation. This in turn can determine the type of educational services that a child receives. If the child is misdiagnosed or not diagnosed at all, this can impede the child's access to any services, he or she might otherwise be entitled to.

## **Education and Training**

It is therefore important that both teachers and parents share respective knowledge of each other's expectations and needs, to provide support for students with disabilities. One way to bridge any such gap is to ensure that both educational professionals and parents and members of the community, are fully trained and knowledgeable as to the needs of students with disabilities. Irvine (2012) referred to the need for teachers to encourage a Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, which in effect entails the following:

"Developing caring relationships with students while maintaining high standards, engaging and motivating students, selecting and effectively using learning resources, and promoting and learning from family and

community engagement". (p.269). These are four influences that can lead to bridging the gap that exists for the needs of students with disabilities.

Gimbert, Desai, and Kerka (2010) also considered the issue of teacher training and the fact that research showed between 30-50% of new teachers leave Urban schools within the first 5 years (Gimbert, et al.,2010). The research focused on looking at ways to "practically implement strategies that meet the needs of all students and families.....", and "that we must also remember that it takes a long-term commitment to issues of social justice in education to find useful and meaningful ways to address the inequitable structures and belief cycles that contribute to issues such as the achievement gap and disproportionality." (Gimbert, et al., p.603). This in turn means that if schools can address the issues that families face by providing meaningful and appropriate education, training, and workshops, they can assist in bringing students with disabilities closer to the goal of equal educational access for all. When addressing the educational system, it is critical for all students to feel valued and supported while part of an equal educational playing field. Educators have an opportunity to create a win-win environment in their classrooms, where all students have equal opportunities to be successful, but this will involve creating an environment where all stakeholders that have an influence in a child's life also can participate in the training and development of skills that will impact the child's development, especially students with disabilities. One way Gimbert, Desai et al suggest this can be achieved is by addressing the issues of 'social justice', that is in effect teachers are trained to be more aware of the communities in which they teach.

Research by Burke (2013) considered the needs of parents in the special education process and whether parents should be supported by advocates. The research supported the viewpoint that parents should have a voice in the special education process and referred to the legislation that was written to include parents, especially through the IEP process (Burke, 2013). The research acknowledged that meetings such as IEPs were a 'primary way in which collaboration occurs." (Burke, 2013, p.225). For parents to be active participants and collaborators in such discussions, parents must be encouraged to have a voice in their child's education. Burke's paper also considered some of the barriers parents may face in the educational realm. For example, parent may not feel like equal partners in the IEP process. (Burke, 2013). It is therefore critical that parents have the necessary support which Burke suggested could be achieved with the implementation of Special Education Advocates. (p. 228).

Research by Starr and Foy (2012), also considered the role of parents in the IEP process. Their research focused on parents of children with disabilities, ASD and the level of satisfaction parents felt with their child's education. The research identified parental concern with the level of 'resentment' and 'prejudice' from teachers, which parents reported as a lack of understanding, by the teacher, of either the child's disability, and/or also other parents' needs. (Starr and Foy,2012, p. 211). The research also referred to the lack of communication and collaboration that parents expressed through their survey comments. For students with disabilities to have an equal access to education, this is a fundamental issue that must be addressed because, parents, just like their children, need to feel empowered and valued to be willing to interact and collaborate with professionals in this field.

In this study, Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier, and Maczuga (2012) focused on whether children from racial- ethnic background were disproportionately represented in early intervention special education services. The research concluded that children from minorities were more likely to be underrepresented than overrepresented in early intervention services. One possible reason given in the research was the "socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural



obstacles." (Morgan, et al., 2012, p.348). These findings could have potential implications for children who are not diagnosed through early intervention programs, and thus, do not receive services that could benefit their early years' development. This research supports the premise that for students with disabilities to be successful in the educational field, and to enjoy equal access, early intervention is critical for interventions to work; not having access or an opportunity to receive early intervention support can put children from migrant and culturally diverse backgrounds at a disadvantage to equal access to educational services in subsequent years.

## Conclusion

This literature review supports the underlying goal of providing research to support ways to improve access to an equal education for student with disabilities. The research provides evidence that providing an environment where all stakeholders feel valued and knowledgeable is crucial to the development and success of students with disabilities. To attain the goal of equal access for all students, this is a work in progress. One step is to recognize there must be a change in the mindset in the educational culture. It is important to acknowledge that there must be a change in the mindset of those which Dweck (2006) identifies as having a fixed mindset. This can be achieved with continuing research into the needs of students with disabilities, and the identification of strategies to meet those needs. There is grounded evidence that the education and training of all stakeholders who influence the lives of children to become both culturally and educationally aware, such as the Cultural Responsive Pedagogy suggested by Irvine (2012), and Special Education Advocates (Burke, 2013), are just a few of the strategies suggested to support children and families impacted by disabilities and cultural diversity. Continual research and implementation of research based practices, all of which takes commitment, dedication, and patience, is the way forward. To not continue would be an injustice to the children who depend on others to be their voice and their advocates. "All stakeholders involved in the education of children within specific communities need to work together to determine the types of strategies and resources to use within in the school." (Griner and Stewart, 2012). It is therefore important that irrespective of the child's disabilities, parents should be a voice that is both heard and understood. This requires school and other educational professionals to be mindful of the needs of parents, particularly those who have children with disabilities, and/ or are culturally diverse, and those disabilities and diversities are embraced, to ensure they are not left out of the decision-making process and are encouraged and given opportunities to collaborate and communicate during any decision-making processes, thereby taking one step closer to the ultimate goal of ensuring equal to the educational services for all students with disabilities.

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## About the Author

Christine Williams is currently a fourth grade ESE teacher, working within the co teach model. She has 15 years of teaching experience within Title 1 elementary schools in South West Florida. Her experience spans teaching diverse students in grades two through five, and undertaking the role of Reading Coach for four years, within the elementary school setting. She earned her Bachelor's degree in English Literary Studies and Education Studies, at Middlesex University in the United Kingdom, where she was born. She is currently certified to teach elementary grades 1-6, ESE grades K-12, and has earned both her Reading and English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsements. She became a National Board Certified Teacher in Literacy: Reading and Language Arts in 2009, and is currently pursuing a Masters of Science degree in Special Education with an endorsement in Autism through Florida International University. Her passion is to continue striving to make a difference for students with disabilities, and providing the best opportunities for all students to become life-long learners.

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## **Section 504 Review and Students with Medical Disabilities | Video**

This 26-minute video is a product of the Utah Parent Center. Other Parent Centers can use the video in their own trainings or connect families with the video online for their own convenient viewing. The video reviews Section 504 and discusses how to address the needs of students with medical disabilities with Section 504 plans.

Access the video, at:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OB\\_LsUgf5QE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OB_LsUgf5QE)

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## **What You Need to Know: Information and Support for Parents of Children with Kidney Disease**

This article from Friendship Circle is written by a parent of a new baby who had an "incurable kidney disease" that would "require her to have a kidney transplant early in her life." The article discusses the impact of kidney disease; gives the parent's perspective on the tears, hurdles, and joy involved in parenting a child with kidney disease; and closes with organizations to connect with and other recommended resources.

**Access the article at:**

<http://www.friendshipcircle.org/blog/2017/03/29/resources-on-kidney-disease/>

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## Buzz from the Hub | Summertime's Ahead

### From Bookshare: Summer Reading Your Child Will Love

Bookshare offers an accessible online library for people with print disabilities. Check out these great titles handpicked by Bookshare for young readers, middle school students, teens, and adults. <https://www.bookshare.org/cms/campaign/summer-2017>

### Don't Stress the Summer: Managing Behavior at Home

This article is written by a mother of three children under 7, the oldest having ADHD and a Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) diagnosis. She shares 7 strategies she uses in her own home to manage behavioral difficulties, promote cooperative interactions, and reduce the overall level of stress. <http://complexchild.org/articles/2016-articles/july/managing-behavior/>

### Exercise and Fitness for Those with Disabilities

Connect the families you serve with the National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability (NCHPAD), especially this page of fact sheets describing various exercise and fitness techniques, adaptations, programming, and related exercise equipment that can be used by, for, and in working with individuals with a variety of disabilities and health conditions. <http://www.nchpad.org/Articles/9/Exercise~and~Fitness>

### Prepare for Success When Traveling with Your Child with Special Needs

Traveling with any child is a game of chance as to how they will react, but parents of children with disabilities will need to do a little more preparing to get from point A to point

B. <http://www.friendshipcircle.org/blog/2017/05/18/prepare-for-success-when-traveling-with-a-child-with-special-needs/>

### A Transition Guide to Postsecondary Education and Employment for Students and Youth with Disabilities

In March, President Trump rescinded the Department's regulations relating to accountability and state plans under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). To reflect these changes, OSERS has revised and reissued this transition guide to remove references to the now rescinded ESSA

regulations. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/transition/products/postsecondary-transition-guide-may-2017.pdf>

### Eligibility Determinations for Children Suspected of Having a Visual Impairment Including Blindness

OSEP's May memo reinforces key points made in its Letter to Kotler (November 2014) as to whether an SEA or LEA could further define the disability category "visual impairment including blindness" under IDEA. In the new May memo, OSEP shares information about outside resources related to the identification and evaluation of children suspected of having a visual impairment including

blindness. <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/letter-on-visual-impairment-5-22-17.pdf>

## **Latest Employment Opportunities Posted on NASET Special Education Teacher**

Suwanee, GA

Job Category: Teacher

Posted on Tuesday, 27. of June 2017

### **Primary Responsibilities:**

Responsible for planning and providing for appropriate learning experiences for students based on the district's AKS curriculum as well as providing an atmosphere and environment conducive to the intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development of individuals

### **License and Certification Qualifications:**

Meet Georgia certification requirements in appropriate field of education.

### **Education Qualifications:**

Bachelor's degree in applicable field of education from a Professional Standards Commission (PSC) approved college or university required.

### **Experience Qualifications:**

Previous teaching experience preferred.

### **Skills Qualifications:**

Knowledge of Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS) Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS) curriculum with in-depth knowledge of content in field of certification; knowledge of techniques for integrating curriculum, GCPS policies, and effective instructional practices; understanding of the teaching/learning process; ability to infuse technology into instruction to increase student learning; ability to work effectively with administrators, colleagues, central office, and school based staff, students, parents, and community; excellent oral and written communication and human relations skills; exemplary teaching and diagnostic assessment skills; mastery of subject area; and knowledge of Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) and due process.

### **Benefits:**

<http://www.gcpsjobs.org/resources/benefits/>

### **Interested?**



Please contact our Recruitment Department at 678-301-6076 and apply to positions today at <http://www.gcpsjobs.org>

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## Teacher of Students with Autism

### Manassas, Virginia

Job Category: Teacher

Posted on Monday, 19. of June 2017

### **BASIC FUNCTION/NATURE OF WORK:**

The special education teacher's function is to develop and implement effective instructional practices based on the needs identified in students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). The teacher will develop, implement and monitor the students' Individualized Education Programs in collaboration with parents and other IEP Team members. The teacher will promote a collaborative relationship with school staff and parents that will foster inclusionary practices.

### **DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES/ILLUSTRATIVE EX OF WORK:**

1. The duties and responsibilities of a special education teacher shall include the responsibilities of teachers as listed in Prince William County Public Schools Regulation 561.01-1, Certificated Personnel Responsibilities and Duties.
2. The teacher shall have knowledge of and adhere to federal, state and local laws and regulations governing the education of students with disabilities.
3. Develop Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), plan curriculum, develop individualized lesson plans and prepare instructional materials that reflect understanding of the learning styles and needs of assigned students, considering the Virginia Standards of Learning, local requirements and physical, emotional, and academic levels of development.
4. Instruct students in all areas specified by the IEP.
5. Develop and implement a variety of effective teaching strategies and techniques; i.e., hands-on, student interaction, lecture, group work, etc., to present instructional content to the students.
6. Plan, integrate and utilize technology for classroom instruction.
7. Utilize assistive technology and specialized equipment.
8. Work with students to increase motivation, provide consistent reinforcement to learning, continuous assessment of level of functioning, and continuous feedback to students for all learning activities.
9. Develop and implement a plan for managing classroom behaviors in accordance with IEP using a variety of positive behavioral supports.
10. Participate in the development and implementation of Behavioral Intervention Plans using the Functional Behavior Assessment process.
11. Administer, interpret, and report standardized test results for purposes of evaluating educational progress and determining eligibility for special education.

12. Participate in staff, department and special education committee meetings as required.
13. Maintain a system of record keeping and data collection following required procedures as outlined in the Special Education Manual.
14. Compile and maintain special education component of Student Education Record as outlined in the Special Education Manual.
15. Complete Prince William County Public Schools' 30-hour staff development requirement.
16. Participate in specialized staff development activities to improve job related skills and apply "best practices" in working with students with disabilities.
17. In a co-teaching situation, collaborate with general education classroom teacher to assess program effectiveness, recommend instructional strategies, ensure implementation of student's required accommodations and/or modifications, provide curriculum coordination between general and special education, and evaluate the student's educational progress.
18. Consult with general education teacher regarding instructional and behavioral strategies for assigned students in general education classes.
19. Inform general education teachers of accommodations and modifications required by the students' IEPs.
20. Plan and supervise assignments for teacher assistant(s) and/or other volunteer(s).
21. Perform other duties within the limits of special education regulation as assigned by the Principal.

**DAYS:** 195

**FULL TIME/PART TIME:** Full Time

Visit <https://jobs.pwcs.edu/Jobs/> to view this and all complete job descriptions.

## BASIC QUALIFICATIONS:

Master's degree preferred. Bachelor's degree required. PWCS is interested in candidates with ESL and bilingual credentials and foreign language fluency.

## STATE REQUIREMENTS/QUALIFICATIONS:

Hold a Virginia teaching certificate with endorsements in the area of disability served. In lieu of complete endorsement, a conditional license may be granted if the teacher is working toward complete endorsement at a rate of a minimum of six (6) semester hours per year. Prince William County Public Schools (PWCS) does not discriminate in employment nor in its educational programs, services and activities on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, age, marital status, veteran status, or disability.

## BENEFITS:

Medical/Dental/Vision Plan Options w no deductible, Virginia Retirement System, Supplemental Retirement, Tuition Reimbursement

## CONTACT:

Julie Curry

EMAIL: [recruit@pwcs.edu](mailto:recruit@pwcs.edu)

TELEPHONE: 703.791.8050

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## Early Childhood Special Education Teacher

Manassas, Virginia

Job Category: Teaching

Posted on Friday, 16. of June 2017

### **BASIC FUNCTION/NATURE OF WORK:**

The special education teacher's function is to develop and implement effective instructional practices based on the needs identified in students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). The teacher will develop, implement and monitor the students' Individualized Education Programs in collaboration with parents and other IEP Team members. The teacher will promote a collaborative relationship with school staff and parents that will foster inclusionary practices.

### **DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES/ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES OF WORK:**

1. The duties and responsibilities of a special education teacher shall include the responsibilities of teachers as listed in Prince William County Public Schools Regulation 561.01-1, Certificated Personnel Responsibilities and Duties.
2. The teacher shall have knowledge of and adhere to federal, state and local laws and regulations governing the education of students with disabilities.
3. Develop Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), plan curriculum, develop individualized lesson plans and prepare instructional materials that reflect understanding of the learning styles and needs of assigned students, considering the Virginia Standards of Learning, local requirements and physical, emotional, and academic levels of development.
4. Instruct students in all areas specified by the IEP
5. Develop and implement a variety of effective teaching strategies and techniques; i.e., hands-on, student interaction, lecture, group work, etc., to present instructional content to the students.
6. Plan, integrate and utilize technology for classroom instruction
7. Utilize assistive technology and specialized equipment.
8. Work with students to increase motivation, provide consistent reinforcement to learning, continuous assessment of level of functioning, and continuous feedback to students for all learning activities.
9. Develop and implement a plan for managing classroom behaviors in accordance with IEP using a variety of positive behavioral supports.
10. Participate in the development and implementation of Behavioral Intervention Plans using the Functional Behavior Assessment process.

11. Administer, interpret, and report standardized test results for purposes of evaluating educational progress and determining eligibility for special education.
12. Participate in staff, department and special education committee meetings as required.
13. Maintain a system of record keeping and data collection following required procedures as outlined in the Special Education Manual.
14. Compile and maintain special education component of Student Education Record as outlined in the Special Education Manual.
15. Complete Prince William County Public Schools' 30-hour staff development requirement.
16. Participate in specialized staff development activities to improve job related skills and apply "best practices" in working with students with disabilities.
17. In a co-teaching situation, collaborate with general education classroom teacher to assess program effectiveness, recommend instructional strategies, ensure implementation of student's required accommodations and/or modifications, provide curriculum coordination between general and special education, and evaluate the student's educational progress.
18. Consult with general education teacher regarding instructional and behavioral strategies for assigned students in general education classes.
19. Inform general education teachers of accommodations and modifications required by the students' IEPs.
20. Plan and supervise assignments for teacher assistant(s) and/or other volunteer(s).
21. Perform other duties within the limits of special education regulation as assigned by the Principal.

**DAYS:** 195

**FULL TIME/PART TIME:** Full-Time

Visit <https://jobs.pwcs.edu/Jobs/> to view this and all complete job descriptions.

## REQUIREMENTS:

Bachelor's degree and eligibility for Virginia licensure as set forth by the Virginia Department of Education required. Master's degree and ESL, bilingual credentials, and/or foreign language fluency preferred.

Prince William County Public Schools (PWCS) does not discriminate in employment nor in its educational programs, services and activities on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, age, marital status, veteran status, or disability.

## BENEFITS:

Medical/Dental/Vision Plan Options w no deductible, Virginia Retirement System, Supplemental Retirement, Tuition Reimbursement

## CONTACT:

Julie Curry

**EMAIL:** [recruit@pwcs.edu](mailto:recruit@pwcs.edu)

**TELEPHONE:** 703.791.8050

## Special Education Preschool Teacher

Longview, WA

Job Category:

Posted on Thursday, 15. of June 2017

The Longview School District has an opening for

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION PRESCHOOL TEACHER – BROADWAY LEARNING CENTER**

**1.0 FTE for the 2017-2018 School Year (2 positions available)**

**CLOSING DATE:** Open until filled

**SUPERVISOR:** Building Principal

### **QUALIFICATIONS:**

1. Bachelor's degree or post-graduate work in early childhood education. Master's degree preferred.
2. Valid Washington State teaching certificate with a special education endorsement. Early childhood special education endorsement preferred.
3. Demonstrated understanding of research-based instructional strategies and assessment practices that support effective instruction.
4. Recent successful experience working with educators in demonstrating and modeling effective instructional strategies and assessment practices.
5. Demonstrated knowledge of needs of diverse learners and strategies for addressing these needs.
6. Understanding of appropriate local and state standards.
7. Maintain integrity of confidential information relating to students, staff and district patrons.
8. Evidence/demonstration of use of technology to enhance student learning or willingness to learn.
9. Demonstrated organizational skills and commitment to follow through on tasks.
10. Demonstrated ability to establish and maintain excellent working relationships with students, teachers, school administrators, support personnel, and community members.
11. Demonstrated ability to effectively communicate orally and in writing.

### **ESSENTIAL JOB FUNCTIONS:**

1. Lead teacher for special education preschool classroom serving three and four year old children with a range of communication, social-emotional, and physical developmental delays, including those with autism spectrum disorder.
2. Plan, develop and implement individualized educational plans for students with developmental learning needs, using early childhood standards and adopted early learning curriculum, preschool math and literacy priority standards and specially designed instruction.
3. Meet district, state, federal timelines and legal requirements related to assessment, IEP design, and Child Outcomes Summary Reporting.
4. Create and modify structure of classroom to meet the needs of the current students.
5. Guide instructional content and monitor individual student progress as member of building data team.
6. Create instructional materials (with modifications to meet individual needs).
7. Create visual systems for classroom (schedules, PECS, social stories).
8. Team with SLP and OT, and extended day autism team to provide services to students with social communication disabilities.
9. Extend professional learning about trends and practices through training with district autism support assessment and planning tool (SCERTS).

## Classroom/Program Consultation and Support

1. Provide training and supervision, and modeling to classroom Para educators in the delivery of appropriate communication, physical, and social interventions, including toileting and feeding programs.
2. Provide training and supervision to Para educators in the delivery classroom behavior management systems including 1,2,3, Magic.
3. Actively participate in building Professional Learning Community (PLC) Data Team, presenting individual and classroom data for monitoring and adjusting instructional interventions.
4. Participate in weekly building curriculum planning meetings.

## Parent Connections

1. Provide support and information to parents through initial and conference home visiting, at least three times each year.
2. Support school-home communication through newsletters and phone calls.
3. Plan and participate in four (2-4) parent education nights and family events, as determined by annual building plan.



4. Assist with the design and modification of instructional and behavioral support materials to be used at home.
5. Attend and participate in district-wide kindergarten transition event to support students and families.

## Community Connections

1. Collaborate with building Head Start/ECEAP teachers in the design of learning opportunities for students to interact with typically developing peers.
2. Serve 2-3 typically developing students in each session to provide peer modeling for students with special education needs.
3. Prepare and deliver kindergarten transition reports to receive elementary buildings in spring of each school year.

## WORKING CONDITIONS / PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

1. May be required to travel between buildings and occasionally attend workshops and conferences with the region or state.
2. Required to work flexible hours and schedule which may include some evenings. Expected to prepare classroom for the start of school and prepare workspace or room for summer cleaning after the last day of school.
3. Classroom/office environment which includes frequently walking, occasional lifting, and bending, stooping, kneeling and keyboarding.

## TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT:

**Contract Term:** 180 days

**Salary:** Based on the 2016-17 state salary schedule. Additional compensation based on Longview Education Association Agreement with the Longview School District.

**Benefits:** Medical, dental, vision and other board approved benefits.

## APPLICATION PROCEDURE:

Current LEA, please submit updated resume, cover letter and 3 confidential professional references.

Apply online at [www.longviewschools.com](http://www.longviewschools.com), and provide the following documents electronically:

- Electronic application
- Electronic Resume
- Scanned copies of University or college transcripts. Original transcripts will be required if hired.
- Scanned copy of current teaching certificate and teaching endorsements
- Scanned copies of state assessments (West B, West E, Praxis I&II)

- Three (3) electronic references

Applications will be accepted until filled by a qualified applicant.

The Longview School District is a Drug & Tobacco Free workplace.

**Immigration Reform and Control Act Requirement:** New employees will be required to complete an INS 1-9 form and must provide proof of employment eligibility.

**Disclosure Statement and Background Check:** Pursuant to RCW 43.43.830 through RCW 43.43.840, new employees will be required to complete a disclosure form indicating any convictions of crimes against persons as listed in the law. In addition, a background check based on fingerprints will be requested from the Washington State Patrol and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

**Job Sharing:** Pursuant to RCW 28A.405.070, the district will accept applications from individuals wishing to share a position.

## NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION

The Longview School District is an Equal Opportunity district in education programs, activities, services, and employment. Longview School District does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, veteran, or military status, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal. We provide equal access to the Boy Scouts of America and other designated youth groups. If you have a physical or mental disability that causes you to need assistance to access school facilities, programs, or services, please notify the school principal. This district endeavors to maintain an atmosphere free from discrimination and harassment. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against should contact the school principal. In addition, the following district employees, located at 2715 Lilac Street, Longview, have been designated to handle questions and complaints of alleged discrimination: Title IX Coordinator and Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator: Ron Kramer, Director of Human Resources, (360) 575-7004, [rkramer@longview.k12.wa.us](mailto:rkramer@longview.k12.wa.us); Section 504/Student ADA Coordinator: Rod McHattie, Director of Special Services, (360) 575-7008, [rmchattie@longview.k12.wa.us](mailto:rmchattie@longview.k12.wa.us)

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## Middle School/ High School Inclusive Specialist (Special Education) Teacher

Los Angeles, CA or Panorama City, CA

Job Category: Full Time

Posted on Thursday, 08. of June 2017

### Description:

Bright Star Schools is seeking a certified Inclusive Specialist (Special Education) Teacher to join our family! The selected candidate will collaborate with the Special Education Team to differentiate lesson plans for a variety of learners (kinesthetic, gifted students, English Language Learners, and/or students with IEPs, etc.) while

upholding Bright Star's mission and values. In addition to salary and benefits (listed below) we are currently offering a \$5,000 signing bonus to all new 2017-18 Inclusive Specialist Teachers.

Bright Star Schools is a free, publicly funded and open enrollment non-profit organization with seven public charters in urban Los Angeles. Across all of our Bright Star sites, over 90% of our students are eligible for free and reduced lunch.

We are people-first as an organization, and students-first across all of our school sites. Bright Star students achieve academic excellence, accept responsibility for their futures, and embrace school as family. We offer students the opportunity to develop their unique talents and ambitions in a supportive, collaborative environment, so they are prepared to be lifelong learners and leaders — to discover ways to create positive change for themselves, their families and their communities.

We make it a high priority to create a safe and inclusive environment for our students and staff. We offer small class sizes, comprehensive teacher support, and numerous collaboration opportunities across the organization and within school sites. We strongly believe in teacher voice, and we work to increase teaching practice and effectiveness through our data-driven and feedback-derived professional development.

## Qualifications & Experience:

- Bachelor's degree
- CA Education Specialist Credential
- Candidates with an intern credential considered
- Two years of urban teaching experience preferred
- Bilingual Spanish or Korean desirable
- Possession of either Bilingual, Cross-Cultural, Language and Academic Development (BCLAD) certificate; Cross-Cultural, Language and Academic Development (CLAD) certificate; Bilingual Certificate of Competence (BCC); or Language Development Specialist (LDS) certificate desirable

## Teacher Traits:

- Belief that every child is deserving an excellent education which prepares him/her for college and life beyond
- Demonstrated ability to teach whole child in an inclusive setting using modifications and accommodations
- Willingness to receive feedback, engage in frequent dialogue and ability to self-reflect
- Life-long learner
- Collaborative
- Belief in data-driven instruction
- Firm, kind approach to managing student behavior
- Technologically competent
- Entrepreneurial spirit and creative problem solver

- Sense of humor and love of teaching

## Benefits:

- Competitive salary based on experience and education (see [here](#) for salary scale)
- \$5,000 signing bonus for all new Inclusive Specialist Teachers
- Health, dental, vision, STRS retirement matching, life insurance, short-term disability, optional 403b plan, sick and vacation paid time off, and holidays
- Laptop
- No-Cost New Teacher Development Program for those with a preliminary teaching credential
- Instructional Leaders as Principals
- School Connectors to support with family engagement and communication

## Apply:

All teacher applications may be submitted online via our [website](#). Completed applications include: cover letter, resume, two letters of recommendation, and three professional references.

## Contact:

Leslie Nguyen, Talent Manager

[lnguyen@brightstarschools.org](mailto:lnguyen@brightstarschools.org)

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## Special Education Teacher

Redwood City, CA

Job Category: Full Time Teaching

Posted on Thursday, 08. of June 2017

## Description:

Summit Public Schools is hiring Special Education teachers in Redwood City, San Jose, and Richmond, CA, as well as Tacoma, WA.

To learn more and apply online, click here: <http://grnh.se/dohwx31>

## Requirements:

- Commitment to uphold Summit's values and belief that all children deserve a rigorous, college-preparatory education
- A California Teaching Credential or one from any other US state (or a commitment to obtain one)
- At least a Bachelor's Degree (a Master's Degree in Education is preferred but not required);
- Meet health clearance, and pass the reference, background/criminal checks, per education code

## Benefits:

Generous retirement, as well as health, vision and dental benefits.

## Contact:

Jenn Pollock

Manager of Selection

[talent@summitps.org](mailto:talent@summitps.org)

Apply online at <http://grnh.se/dohwx31>

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## Teaching in New York City

### New York City, NY

Job Category: Full Time Teaching

Posted on Friday, 14. of April 2017

## DESCRIPTION:

The New York City Department of Education is looking for bright, motivated, and dedicated teachers who are passionate about sparking opportunity for all students. With over 1,800 schools and 1.1 million students, New York City provides endless opportunities for you to hone your craft and build your career.

Whether in Coney Island or the South Bronx, our team of exceptional educators is passionate about urban education and is fiercely committed to success for all students. Our schools range in size (from 200-4,000 students) and are as diverse as our students and the neighborhoods we serve, allowing you to choose a school community that fits your needs as an educator. And with more than 200 innovative partnerships with leading arts, science and cultural organizations around the city, you will never run out of ways to expand your curriculum and pique students' interest.

New York City public schools are committed to fostering curiosity and confidence in all students, and

jumpstarting the next generation of innovators, leaders and citizens. Now is your chance to help us make that happen.

## COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS:

New York City public schools offer competitive starting salaries ranging from \$54,000 to \$81,694, based on prior teaching experience as well as your undergraduate and graduate education.

You may also become eligible for additional income through a wide array of incentives and school positions that will stretch and challenge you as an educator. You might earn additional grants by teaching in a select, high-need school as part of our Teachers of Tomorrow program, or by helping your colleagues develop in one of our many teacher leadership roles .

## REQUIREMENTS:

To apply to teach in New York City, candidates must first meet the following requirements:

- Possess or be on track to earn a New York State Department of Education (NYSED) teaching certification by the start of the 2017-18 school year. If you are not already NYSED-certified, there are several ways to obtain certification .
- Complete an online teacher application at TeachNYC.net

Learn more about our application requirements and deadlines and apply to teach in New York City today!

## APPLY:

[http://teachnyc.net/?utm\\_source=job-board&utm\\_medium=job-posting&utm\\_campaign=2017-applications&utm\\_term=Spark&utm\\_content=Naset](http://teachnyc.net/?utm_source=job-board&utm_medium=job-posting&utm_campaign=2017-applications&utm_term=Spark&utm_content=Naset)

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## Special Education Specialist

### Multiple Locations

Job Category:

Posted on Monday, 24. of October 2016

### Description:

The primary responsibility of the Special Education Specialist is to provide instruction and other related services to Special Education students. The Special Education Specialist will also facilitate diagnostic assessment including administration, scoring and interpretation. Will review and revise IEP's as needed. Will support instruction in reading, math, and written language for students, tutor individual and small groups of students, administer and score academic testing, write individualized education plans and support other

academic programs as needed. The Special Education Specialist will work under the leadership of the Program Specialist and the Director of Special Education. This position will be available to provide direct instruction to students 6 hours a day.

## Essential Functions include, but are not limited to the following:\*

- Provide instruction to students with special needs and identified learning disabilities in a special education program.
- Tutor individual and small groups of students, reinforcing language and reading concepts.
- Administer and score individual and group tests.
- Schedule IEP meetings, coordinating schedules with parents, general education teacher(s), administrator, and all appropriate special education staff.
- Conduct IEP meetings.
- Communicate and coordinate special needs evaluation and testing with speech teacher, psychologist, and other service providers.
- Communicate with parents regarding individual student progress and conduct.
- Maintain progress records and record progress toward IEP goals.
- Record progress within the independent study program.
- Perform other duties in support of the Special Education Specialist program.
- Support other academic programs offered within the independent study program.

Various openings in Burbank region, San Gabriel region, Victor Valley region, Inland Empire region, San Bernardino region, and San Juan region.

## Knowledge, Skills and Abilities Required:

- Special Education Specialist Certificate or ability to obtain Mild/Moderate Certificate.
- Ability to teach students of grades K-12.
- Ability to work with children of all ages.
- Ability to understand, adopt, and support the independent study program, concepts and their philosophies.
- Ability to organize and present ideas effectively in oral and written form.
- Ability to make skillful decisions.
- Ability to work under pressure and meet deadlines.
- Ability to operate a PC computer, word processor, copier, FAX, and other office machines.

## Education and Experience:

- BA/BS Degree



- Valid California Teaching Credential in Special Education (Mild/Moderate)

## Contact:

Nehia Hearn

Human Resources Assistant

Direct: 626) 204-2552 Fax: 626) 685-9316

[nhearn@ofy.org](mailto:nhearn@ofy.org)

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## Acknowledgements

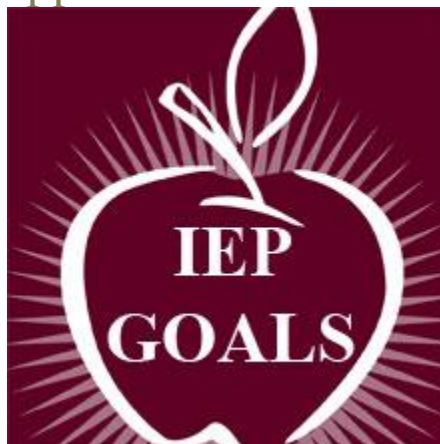
Portions of this month's **NASET's Special Educator e-Journal** were excerpted from:

- Center for Parent Information and Resources
- Committee on Education and the Workforce
- FirstGov.gov-The Official U.S. Government Web Portal
- Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals (JAASEP)
- National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth
- National Institute of Health
- National Organization on Disability
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
- U.S. Department of Education
- U.S. Department of Education-The Achiever
- U.S. Department of Education-The Education Innovator
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- U.S. Department of Labor
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration
- U.S. Office of Special Education

The **National Association of Special Education Teachers (NASET)** thanks all of the above for the information provided for this edition of the **NASET Special Educator e-Journal**.

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### NASET Application for iPad and iPhone



To learn more click on the image above or - [Click here](#)

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