

NASET Special Educator e-Journal



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Special Education Legal Alert

Perry A. Zirkel

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This monthly legal alert addresses three significant procedural issues under the IDEA—child find when the child is determined not to be eligible; child-identified e-mails that are not part of the child’s file; and the removal (or refusal to include) planning time in a child’s IEP. For automatic e-mailing of future legal alerts, sign up at perryzirkel.com.

In *Burnett v. San Mateo-Foster City School District* (2018), the Ninth Circuit addressed two separate issues—whether a child find violation constitutes denial of FAPE if the ultimate determination is that the child is not eligible under the IDEA, and (b) whether e-mails concerning a child with a disability that are not part of the child’s file are “education records” under the IDEA (and, based on its identical definition, FERPA), which are subject to access (i.e., inspection and review) by the child’s parents (and, as a separate matter not at issue in this case, their consent for release, with limited exceptions, to other parties).

For the first issue, in this case the district violated child find by failing to provide a timely evaluation of a child reasonable suspected of being eligible as specific learning disability (SLD) or other health impairment (OHI) but the parents failed to prove that the child qualified under either one. Affirming that the child did not meet the criteria for eligibility, the Ninth Circuit rejected SLD based on prong 1 (i.e., the classification) and OHI based on prong 2 (i.e., the need for special education). Thus, agreeing that the child find failure was a procedural violation without the requisite substantive loss, the Ninth Circuit ruled that the child find violation in these circumstances did not constitute a denial of FAPE.

Other courts have reached this same conclusion, but it limits the legal significance of child find. The alternatives for the parents in such cases of ultimate non-eligibility include (a) resorting to the state complaint procedures avenue, which tends to be much more strict about procedural compliance; (b) judicially testing the alternative argument that this procedural violation significantly impeded the parents’ opportunity for participation in the FAPE decision-making process, which would require a stretched interpretation of FAPE; or (c) seeking attorneys’ fees, which would require a similar stretching of prevailing party status, or (d) making an alternative claim under Section 504, which requires child find but has a broader scope of eligibility.

For the second issue, the court concluded that the district's failure to provide the parents with access to the emails concerning their child that were not printed out and added to the child's physical file was not a procedural violation under the IDEA (or FERPA), because although personally identifiable to the child, the district did not "maintain" these emails.	At a time when digital technology is changing the meaning of a child's file, this ruling needs to be applied with care. If the district had maintained the emails in a "permanent secure electronic data base," per the language of the Supreme Court's underlying FERPA decision in <i>Owasso Independent School District v. Falvo</i> (2002), the outcome may well have been the opposite of the court's decision in this case.
In <i>M.C. v. Knox County Board of Education</i> (2018), a federal district court in Tennessee focused on the issue of whether planning time for preparing the student's specially designed instruction is either a "related service" or a "support for school personnel" under the IDEA and, thus, a required part of the IEP. In this case, the school district removed, without prior written notice, the materials preparation/curriculum modification time that had been part of the IEP of two separate students with disabilities.	
For the "related services" part of the analysis, the court concluded that this planning time was not like the examples of "other supportive services" specified in the IDEA definition and, thus, not within the intended scope of this term. The specified examples, such as counseling and occupational therapy, were additional necessary services, whereas materials preparation is "only a <i>means to the end</i> of providing a specified service." Moreover, the amount of each necessary service is critical, whereas "it does not matter how long it takes the educator to prepare the modified materials."	This decision is not an officially published or appellate decision, but it represents the rather conservative judicial approach that is increasingly prevalent in IDEA and other such cases. The court dispassionately examined the language of the regulations and—in agreeing with the practical variance in the ability and efficiency of teachers—deferred to the perspective of school authorities. In contrast, the court did not delve into the semantics of "modification" v. accommodation or other more limited adjustment that is prevalent in relation to the separable issue of high-stakes testing.
Rejecting for the same reasons the alternative of "supplementary aids and services," the court next focused on the definitional language for "supports for school personnel" and reached a similar conclusion: "So long as the students receive the specially designed instruction described therein, the IEPs are not rendered defective simply because they fail to include a single sentence describing the amount of time that must be spent preparing classroom materials." The court cited the "reasonable, not ... ideal" language of <i>Andrew F.</i> as support for this conclusion.	Here, again, the court distinguished "must" from "should," concluding that the ultimate question of applicable requirements is for the legislature, not the judiciary. More specifically, the court examined first the IDEA legislation, then the IDEA regulations, and finally—in the absence of sufficient specification therein and in the interpretive case law—the official commentary accompanying the regulations, with overall reference to the Supreme Court's <i>Rowley-Andrew F.</i> approach to FAPE. Conversely, however,

	the IDEA does not prohibit a district from including planning time in IEPs.
Finally, the court addressed the district’s failure to provide prior written notice (PWN) before removing planning time from the IEP. First, the court concluded that this planning time is not within the IDEA’s specified scope of the requirement for PWN—identification, evaluation, placement, or FAPE. Second, even if it were within this required scope, it was only a procedural violation, without the requisite substantive harm to the student or participatory denial to the parents (who discussed the matter at IEP meetings before and after the removal).	Again, the court distinguished between the legal minimum and professional proactivity: “While it may be a better policy to give parents advance notice of any and all changes to an IEP, Defendants were not required to issue a PWN under the circumstances of this case.” More generally, the court acknowledged the parents’ understandable frustration in this case due to the prior inclusion of planning time in the IEPs, but in the absence of some legal basis for judicial action, “[s]uch detailed matters of educational policy are squarely within the legislature’s purview.”

Book Review: Hacking Leadership

By Nancy Watson

Sanfelippo, J., Sinanis, T. Hacking Leadership. Ohio: Times 10, 2016. 155pp. \$18.36.

“Because a school’s culture extends to all of its stakeholders, effective interactions are the single most important non-negotiable in creating flourishing schools.” The authors, Joe Sanfelippo and Tony Sinanis believe that creating personal relationships with staff, teachers, and students is what makes schools grow and be successful. This book talks about the ways schools can grow, children can learn and the school be successful all around.

Dr. Sinanis is an award winning Principal of the Year along with being a Lead Learner. He has studied the relationship between active participation on Twitter and the professional development of principals. Dr. Sanelippo is a Superintendent in Wisconsin. He has a master’s in Educational Leadership and a PhD in Leadership, Learning and Service. Both authors believe that leaders/principals need to be present and engaged. They feel that schools are run by managers and not leaders, so this book talks about changing from being managers to leaders. I agree with this reasoning because great leaders model, engage and are present in their schools. They are visible, in the classroom, collaborating with teachers, knowing students names. I have been in a school where the principal is in the hallways during the changing of classes. He knew every student’s name, talked with the teachers and developed a relationship with everyone. As a staff, he had all of us read “From Good to Great Schools” and it was on the same lines of Hacking Leadership in that it is all about the development of relationships, collaboration within the school, parents and community. Within this type of environment, children learn and that’s what it is all about. I have also been in schools where the principal was in meetings all the time and was unapproachable. She had no relationship with the teachers or the students. The morale within the school community was affective. This is why I totally agree with the authors of Hacking Leadership.

The point of this book is to guide the leaders of schools towards having a great school culture by building relationships, engaging teachers in sharing ideas, getting students actively involved in the school community as well as parents being a part of the school culture. Great leaders will hire the right staff that shares the same vision. I have agreed with the authors’ methods and have not read any potential areas of weakness. I believe that if principals follow their guide, that their school will be successful.

Hacking Leadership is a very easy and fast read and it motivates the reader to search for ways to make schools great and the importance of relationships. I would highly recommend this book for principals and teachers to read.

About the Author

My name is Nancy Watson and I grew up in New Jersey and have resided in South Florida for the past six years. I have two grown sons and a granddaughter who live out west. I am a Special Education teacher for young adults who are 18-22 years old and who are transitioning from high school into the workforce. I am entering my seventh year at my school but have a total of 20 years of experience working in special education. I enjoy spending my time with family, friends and love relaxing by the beach or traveling to faraway places.

Final Rule: Delay of Compliance Dates for Disproportionality

On July 3, 2018, the U.S. Department of Education issued a final rule that will delay by two years the date for States to comply with the “Equity in IDEA” or “significant disproportionality” regulations. Set to go into effect on July 1, 2018, implementation of those rules are now delayed until July 1, 2020. In the same final rule, the Department also postponed the date for including children ages 3 through 5 in the analysis of significant disproportionality, with respect to the identification of children as children with disabilities and as children with a particular impairment. The initial implementation deadline was July 1, 2020; the deadline is now two years later: July 1, 2022.

**Access the final rule, which includes background information
and an analysis of comments and changes, at:**

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/07/03/2018-14374/assistance-to-states-for-the-education-of-children-with-disabilities-preschool-grants-for-children>

Access the final rule in PDF (including the analysis of comments and changes):

<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2018-07-03/pdf/2018-14374.pdf>

2016 Final Regulations | On December 19, 2016, the U.S. Department of Education issued final significant disproportionality regulations for IDEA. Those regulations brought numerous changes to how states, school districts, and schools would be required to monitor, analyze, and report their special education practices and policies addressing disproportionality in special education. Of particular concern was the seemingly disproportionate rates at which students from specific racial/ethnic groups were identified as having a disability, *which* disability, and whether these student groups were at higher risk of being placed in more segregated or exclusionary environments. Also of great concern was their seemingly higher risk of being disciplined more harshly than students from other racial/ethnic groups. Those 2016 final regulations were set to go into effect on July 1, 2018.

February 2018 Proposed Rule to Delay Implementation | On February 27, 2018, the Secretary of Education published a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) in the Federal Register (83 FR 8396) proposing to postpone by two years the date for States to comply with the “Equity in IDEA” or “significant disproportionality” regulations. The NPRM also proposed to postpone the date for including children ages three through five in the analysis of significant disproportionality, with respect to the identification of children as children with disabilities and as children with a particular impairment, from July 1, 2020, to July 1, 2022. The NPRM was followed by a 90-day open public comment period, where stakeholders could respond to the new proposed rule with comments, suggestions, criticisms, support, or perspectives. Comments were received from 390 parties. The public comment period ended on May 14, 2018.

July 2018 Rule to Delay Implementation by Two Years | As stated in the first paragraph above, the Department has issued this new rule, enacting the proposed delay with no changes.

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New Special Education Teacher Perceptions of Classroom Assessment Knowledge

By Karen M. Potter
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Abstract

This qualitative interview study examined the perceptions of classroom assessment competence and knowledge of five recent graduates of the University of New Mexico Special Education Dual License Program (SEDLP). A two interview (per participant) semi-structured format was used with constant comparative methodology to gain an understanding of three broad questions. First, in what ways do graduates characterize their theoretical understanding and ability to apply classroom assessment for students who receive special education services? Second, in what ways do SEDLP graduates report that they use classroom assessment to inform classroom instruction? Finally, what features of the SEDLP do graduates identify as having positively or negatively impacted their ability to effectively use classroom assessment? Content analysis of the interviews allows discussion of these questions and permits explanation of implications for assessment preparation within the general field of Special Education teacher preparation.

Keywords: classroom assessment, teacher preparation, special education, dual license

Assessment within the field of Special Education is a broad topic with a complex history. Requirements for special education licensure, the quality of preservice teacher preparation, and the match or mismatch between preservice field experiences and new teacher hiring vary widely (Delano, Keefe, & Perner, 2010), adding to the difficulty in appropriately preparing teachers to skillfully implement assessment. Even so, considering new special education teachers' assessment perceptions for one teacher preparation program may offer insight into concerns that more broadly affect the preparation of special education teachers.

The purpose of this qualitative interview study was to explore what recent graduates of the University of New Mexico (UNM) Special Education Dual License Program (SEDLP) understand about classroom assessment. This exploration was framed by a social constructivist perspective and uses naturalistic inquiry methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this paper I first describe the context of inquiry by a) explaining the condition of general preservice teacher classroom assessment knowledge b) providing definitions and descriptions of assessment terms and concepts used in interpreting study data and c) providing a description of the SEDLP. Next, I describe the study methodology and present the resulting themes. Finally, I discuss implications for special education teacher preparation.

Pre-Service Teacher Knowledge of Classroom Assessment

Several methods have been used to attempt an understanding of what assessment instruction is provided to pre-service teachers. Results from surveys of educational institutions suggest that traditional summative assessment is the most common method of assessing pre-service assessment coursework (Conderman, Katsiyannis, & Franks, 2001; Conderman, Morin, & Stevens, 2005). Special education preservice teachers appear to receive more assessment instruction than general education preservice teachers (Begeny & Martens, 2006), but knowledge gaps remain, including in the areas of k-3 classroom reading assessment (McCombes-Tolis & Feinn, 2008) and "unit and long-term planning and assessment" (Jenkins, Pateman, & Black, 2002, p.

368). Particular disability service eligibility categories as described by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004) also contain significant gaps in assessment understanding, such as students with both disabilities and deafness (Dodd & Scheetz, 2003) and students with more severe intellectual disability (McNicholas, 2000).

What is particularly relevant to educational assessment practice is how teachers are assessing the day to day learning of content in classes. Campbell and Evans (2000) described the situation in which preservice teacher lesson plans minimally connect learning objectives and assessments to measure the specified objectives. Kohler, Henning, and Usma-Wilches (2008) explained a limited preservice teacher understanding of formative assessment methods. Maclellan's (2004) content analysis of pre-service assessment essays discussed a lack of knowledge of authentic assessment, performance-based assessment, and the links between teaching methods and meaningful assessment. As a whole, a greater body of research is needed to fully understand how special education teachers are conducting daily classroom assessment.

Definition and Description of Fundamental Assessment Terms, Concepts, and Methods

Ysseldyke and Algozzine (2006) defined assessment as "a process of collecting data for the purpose of making decisions about students" (p.74). This is a definition that clearly includes the type of classroom assessment that may be used daily by special education teachers. The National Research Council (NRC) of the National Academies (2008) described assessment as requiring "purposefulness" and "systematicity," which addresses the components of the Ysseldyke and Algozzine (2006) definition. The NRC also stated that within the context of purposefulness and systematicity, assessments should have a clear purpose, the method used should be determined by the purpose, and the method used should be examined for appropriateness (validity and reliability) for each student assessed.

When instruction and assessment are effectively linked, student achievement increases (Campbell & Collins, 2007; Hexom, Menoher, Plummer, & Stone, 2008). Creating this link may require the use of many assessment methods. These include using backward design for matching instructional goals to particular assessments (Campbell & Evans, 2000; Parrish & Stodden, 2009), using progress monitoring strategies that reflect consistency and fidelity to methods (O'Connor & Yasik, 2007; Stecker, Lembke, & Foegen, 2008), using authentic assessment as a progress monitoring strategy (Keilty, LaRocco, & Casell, 2009), and effectively using varied methods of Classroom Based Assessment (CBA) (Allsopp et al., 2008; Brookhart, Andolina, Zuza, & Furman, 2004; Brookhart & Bronowicz, 2003; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1986; Gansle & Noell, 2008; Jones, 2001; Shapiro & Ager, 1992; Spinelli, 2008). There has also been a great deal of research in effectively using curriculum based measurement (CBM) as an assessment method: (Allinder, Bolling, Oats, & Gagnon, 2000; Cannon, 2006; Coddington, Skowron, & Pace, 2005; Deno et al., 2009; Foegen, Espin, Allinder, & Markell, 2001; Foegen, Jiban, & Deno, 2007; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1991; Gansle, VanDerHeyden, Noell, Resetar, & Williams, 2006; Hosp & L. S. Fuchs, 2005; Jenkins, Graff, & Miglioretti, 2009; Madelaine & Wheldall, 2004; McMaster & Espin, 2007; de Ramirez & Shapiro, 2006; Roehrig, Duggar, Moats, Glover, & Mincey, 2008; Stecker & L. S. Fuchs, 2000; Wallace, Espin, McMaster, Deno, & Foegen, 2007; Wayman, Wallace, Wiley, Tichá, & Espin, 2007).

One area that is less well described is formative assessment methods (Allen, Ort, & Schmidt, 2009; Anderson, Zuiker, Taasobshirazi, & Hickey, 2007; Brookhart, Moss, & Long, 2008).

Description of the SEDLP

The UNM Special Education Dual License Program (SEDLP) is an undergraduate program in the Department of Educational Specialties in the College of Education. Approximately 30-40 students are enrolled in this program each year. Students graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Education degree in Special Education and Elementary Education. This includes coursework making students eligible for both a general education license (k-8) and a special education license (prek-12). Students in the SEDLP follow a four-semester prescribed sequence of classes which includes a full year of student teaching that encompasses both special education and general education environments. The program goal is to produce graduates who are able to “be effective across the full continuum of educational settings for all students” (UNM College of Education, 2013). My relationship to the SEDLP has included serving as a cooperating teacher for five preservice teachers enrolled in the program. As a cooperating teacher, I gained familiarity with the SEDLP program as it related to my work at the middle school level in a large southwestern public school district. I was also part of the community of educators providing joint support to the cohort of SEDLP preservice teachers who were experiencing student teaching at our school.

Method

Participants

After institutional review board (IRB) approval, participants were sought from recent SEDLP graduates. Recruitment was conducted by advertising on college of education notice boards and by email contact of recent graduates using the graduate listserve. Before participating in the interviews, all participants signed consent forms, completed a brief demographic survey, and selected a pseudonym. At the time of the study, all participants were employed as public school teachers hired to provide special education services in one of two school districts. For all participants, this was the first employment experience as licensed special education teachers. Table 1 describes participant characteristics and their teaching assignments. Of the five participants, one (Carmen) identified herself as Hispanic and four (Cathy, Dawn, Lynn, and Shelly) identified as Caucasian. Two taught in middle schools in urban areas of high economic need (Carmen, Cathy) while three taught in elementary schools in middle-class suburban areas (Dawn, Lynn, Shelly).

Table 1: Participant Demographic Survey Information

Participant	Ethnicity	Age	Graduated	Grade/Content	Service Setting
Carmen	Hispanic	18-25	2012	Middle Science	Self-Contained
Cathy	Caucasian	26-36	2012	Middle Science	Inclusive
Dawn	Caucasian	26-36	2011	Elementary 1-3	Self-Contained
Lynn	Caucasian	18-25	2012	Preschool	Self-Contained
Shelly	Caucasian	18-25	2011	Elementary Gifted	Self-Contained

Note. Elementary Gifted = students identified as twice-exceptional (giftedness and disability). Inclusive service setting = instruction provided 80% or more of the day with general education peers. Self-contained = instruction provided less than 80% of the day.

Data Collection and Analysis

First and second interviews were conducted between October 30, 2012, and August 28, 2013. Interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and were conducted in-person in three types of locations based on participant preferences: participant homes, participant work places, and my home. Two second round interviews were conducted over the telephone to accommodate one participant who had moved out of state and one participant who was otherwise unable to schedule the interview. After each interview, transcription was conducted by typing word for word using repeated listening and checking for accuracy by reading the entire transcript as the recording played and correcting errors. During this process I removed any potentially individually identifying information.

First round interview questions included:

1. Please tell me how you define assessment.
2. In what ways have you been able to use assessment in your classroom?
3. Please describe what you do to determine if students with disabilities are learning.
4. Please describe any aspects of classroom assessment that you believe you do well or that you believe you do not do well.
5. Please share any elements of the teacher preparation program or other experiences that have influenced you in the area of classroom assessment.
6. What do you wish you'd learned more about in the area of classroom assessment?

After all first round transcriptions were completed (Seidman, 2006), I began first-round data analysis by printing transcripts on a different color of paper for each participant to aid in determining which eventual emergent themes were consistent across participants and which were addressed by only some participants. I repeatedly read transcripts and marked them with hash marks to break responses into units of thought or "units of information" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.344). After marking, I cut each unit of thought and glued it to an 8 x 5 index card with one card for each unit of thought.

Once separation into units of thought was complete, I began coding for the content addressed in each unit of thought and physically sorted the cards into categories that addressed similar content. I created an initial categorization key and labeled the back of each card for later use. Throughout the analysis, I used a constant comparative process described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as an extension of work by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Through this process I identified areas in the data which needed further exploration to reach conceptual saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), and formed second round interview questions from this process (Seidman, 2006). Second round interview questions included:

1. Please tell me about challenges you have had when creating your own informal assessments. a) How do you know in informal assessment whether or not learning has occurred? b) What are your next steps after oral (verbal) assessment?
2. Please discuss any assessments you do of social or behavioral issues. What are your next steps after these assessments?
3. Can you give some advice to new teachers about how to develop or implement assessments that will meet the needs of all learners?

Trustworthiness

As a trustworthiness measure, Critical Friend 1, a doctoral student nearing the end of her program, independently sorted the data cards into categories and we reconciled the minor differences in categorization. After the second round of interviews, transcription, breaking content into units of thought, and using a constant comparative process to analyze data, Critical Friend 1 sorted a random sample of 1/3 of the new cards to determine if new categories would emerge. We discussed categorization until reaching categorical consensus. As another measure of trustworthiness, I provided a random sample of 100 cards to Critical Friend 2, a faculty member of the UNM SEDLP, who sorted the cards into identified categories. From this sort it was possible to obtain an initial categorization percentage agreement of 61%. After discussion, it was clear that the majority of the sorting differences were between theme categories 2 and 3, and we discussed these categories to add greater definition. Finally, I offered all participants a member check via email summary, an in-person follow-up meeting, or focus group participation. All requested an email summary of the main ideas they had expressed and four provided feedback to the summary.

Four Resultant Themes

New Teachers Were Able to Define Classroom Assessment and Describe Types

Each participant gave a similar basic definition of assessment. For example: “I would define assessment as getting a reading of the student’s knowledge of any given subject area” (Cathy), “being able to determine whether or not something that is being taught is being learned,” (Shelly), “a way to understand what students or individuals understand about a topic” (Lynn), and “to see where they’re at” (Carmen). These definitions illustrate concepts of assessment purpose such as determining a baseline skill level and using formative assessment. Summative assessment as a concept was also captured in descriptions of testing: “They always have an end of the...chapter test” (Carmen). Another purpose explained across participants was “to see how much progress the students made” (Lynn) in comparison to earlier scores, peers, and IEP goals. These definitions are consistent with the more formally stated Ysseldyke and Algozzine (2006) definition of assessment. When participants talk about “getting a reading” (Cathy) “being able to determine” (Shelly) and “a way to understand” (Lynn) they are talking about having a process of collecting data. The “making decisions” (p.74) component of the Ysseldyke and Algozzine definition is also captured by participants: “in reading groups this would change depending on where they are in their reading” (Dawn), “what I do after assessment is I try to see okay who are the ones that keep getting the A’s, who are the ones that keep getting the F’s...and I try to look at that and figure...okay what are they doing?” (Carmen).

These participant responses also address the NRC (2008) description of assessment to include purposefulness and systematicity. Purposefulness was summarized by Lynn as “a way to understand what students or individuals understand about a topic” and the value of systematicity is described by Shelly: “assessment is...really rigorous and it is time-consuming but it’s well worth it ‘cause I think you can really get to know your students on a deeper level.”

One additional purpose of assessment was explained by Carmen: “for my own data just to see how I’m doing as a teacher.” This was an interesting addition to the purposes of assessment because although it was made in the context of low-stakes, formative and summative classroom assessment, it matches the purpose of assessment as used by school systems in the larger climate of student high-stakes testing as a measure of teacher quality.

Participants each described an array of assessment types, including informal assessments, formal assessments, projects, verbal/oral, games, paper folds, check-ins, hands-on projects, observation, presentations, exit tickets, posters, journal entries, tests and quizzes, task completion, hidden purpose, and physical movements. In addition to these descriptions they specifically recommended using frequent informal assessment (4 participants), multiple choice tests (1), “special needs” versions of grade level content tests (1), vocabulary quizzes (1), projects (2), task analysis (1), environmental assessment (1), oral assessment (3), behavioral observation (3), adaptations of existing assessments (3), checklists (1), and rubrics (2).

New Teachers Were Able to Explain Personal Implementation of Classroom Assessment

Participants viewed a broad range of assessment strategies as effective or worth implementing as demonstrated by the variety of comments in this area. Two strategies were addressed by every participant: 1) provide for student affect needs and 2) individualize and differentiate. Regarding affect, participants consistently mentioned student nerves, stress, or past negative experiences regarding assessment. As explained by Carmen and Shelly: “My answer is always you’re not stupid, you need that extra time” and “some kids need that processing time to reflect and think and even if it’s like...a nerves thing I think they need the opportunity.” Cathy explained the need to understand “what they actually know when they’re not uncomfortable and...under the pressure of the test.” Although participants commented on the need to address this topic for students, little was stated about how to resolve the issue of negative affect about testing beyond modeling positive talk to students.

Participants explained a variety of ways in which they individualized assessments. Although individualizing assessment and differentiating assessment are different concepts, it appeared that participants were using the terms somewhat interchangeably. Greater probing would be needed to determine exact participant definitions, but it is clear that all participants considered it important to broaden the methods of administering assessments. Cathy explained this as “I just used as many resources as possible from textbooks and...altered them based on what was right for my students.” Shelly explained: “it’s really crucial that as teachers it’s not...one assessment fits all. It really is each kid needs some type of tweaking.”

There were many examples of how participants individualized. As Lynn explained, “We have one student that loves snakes and so when we made the letters look like snakes that was the thing that made it so he would be able to tell us what letters he knows.” Dawn also explained individualizing for a student: “we did a Velcro on one side and he was able to match them...saying the colors that was more challenging for him, but he was able to match them.”

Shelly explained individualizing by using an assessment method that matches the strengths of individual students. She stated, “it’s based a lot upon how well, what areas my kids excel in. Um, if it’s written then they’ll do it written, if it’s oral then I’ll have them do it oral.” Lynn summarized the perspective of the three elementary teachers by stating her belief in “putting them in a situation where they can show what they know.”

Cathy and Carmen discussed individualizing assessments in the middle school science context mostly by adapting summative tests. As Cathy explained, “the format was maybe not working like...maybe multiple choice isn’t working for everybody...I would change the format but maybe keep the basic structure.” Carmen explained

trying to adapt tests using multiple methods: by shortening questions, by extensively previewing test questions in review sessions, and by using the “special needs” version of the test provided by the publisher. She explained that although the “special needs” test uses simpler language, it is often still too difficult for students without teacher assistance with question-reading. Carmen also explained that many of her students were labeled as English Language Learners, and could in some cases provide greater information about what they knew using Spanish, which she then translated and wrote for them in English. Cathy and Carmen spoke extensively about putting a lot of effort into making accommodations and modifications without seeing much of an increase in student success on these tests.

Three other areas had data generated from four of the five participants: meeting district requirements, having measurable criteria, and using frequent informal assessment. Although no questions were asked about standardized assessments, participants also commented about them.

Varied district requirements mentioned by participants included DRA reading assessments, SPIRE reading assessments, Brigance assessments, and unit tests for middle school science classes. Having measurable criteria was most clearly explained by Shelly: “it has to be measurable if you’re collecting data.” She went on to explain that this includes both academic and behavioral concerns and both formal and informal assessment. Lynn gave the example of task analysis for learning to use the “potty,” which has clear measurable criteria, such as washing hands: “I have some sort of criteria or rubric” and use data sheets to record this data. Cathy describes criteria as the degree to which they match the content goal: “some of them will maybe not perhaps get the complete correct answer but you can tell that they are getting the concepts.” These examples provide evidence of participants’ understanding of the “systematicity” component of the NRC’s (2008) description of assessment. Frequent informal assessment was described in several ways by Carmen, Cathy, Lynn, and Shelly and is another component that addresses systematicity. Carmen explained it as largely oral assessment in which all students were invited to participate and as the product of exit tickets. Cathy described it as checking-in with specific questions at least ten times during a typical science class of 45 minutes. Lynn described it similarly: “I check for understanding, understanding the way they’re...able to explain their answers.” Shelly added, “informally it’s every day that I’m assessing them.” It is clear from these comments that regardless of how often participants actually assess, participants do consider it important to conduct frequent informal assessment.

New Teachers Experienced Challenges in Assessing

This category parallels and extends the previous theme at times in that many implementation strategies could be viewed as challenging to implement. These include addressing student affect, differentiating and individualizing for different skill levels, using valid assessments, and finding or creating appropriate assessments.

Challenges regarding standardized assessments were also described by four participants, although semi-structured interview questions did not include this topic as it is outside the focus of this study. Participants discussed their concerns about student nervousness (affect), test validity for students with disabilities, and the consequences for poor results. Lynn also explained a lack of knowledge about “what they’re trying to hit on. Is it like related to state standards completely or is it just national” and Dawn explained that “some of the areas...I don’t think I covered very well.” The new state teacher evaluation system being implemented in participants’ districts during the year of this study bases 50% of a teacher’s effectiveness rating on growth in standardized

test scores. Teachers who do not score at least “effective” are required to participate in an improvement plan. Their employment may be in jeopardy and they may feel shame at being labeled ineffective or minimally effective, making this type of assessment of great concern to participants.

Differentiating and individualizing assessments also included concerns of four participants. Carmen particularly described the number of ways in which she was struggling to adapt grade level assessments to address significantly lower reading levels and the needs of English Language Learners: “I’ve had to sometimes make two sets of the same test just different wording” and “it’s like one question...for them that will take three hours.” Cathy had a similar concern about low student reading levels in that “when they take the tests I spend a lot of time breaking it down and helping them to figure out what it’s really asking.” At no time did Carmen and Cathy state that it is possible, with adaptations, for their students to be successful on these tests. Carmen in particular provided multiple examples of other methods to formally assess (posters, presentations, hands-on projects) but still assessed using adapted grade level chapter and unit tests rather than replacing them with another method.

Of additional concern in this area is providing the right level of challenge and an appropriate assessment for each student. Shelly explains the problem when using a district required reading assessment. One of her students had both giftedness in conceptual understandings and a learning disability that affected reading. She explains:

He was reading two grade levels below so you know content reading about a farm or a cat and it was just you know this kid had no interest in it...so he could listen to lectures and he could retain it all but when it came to the (test)...I kept saying he could do so much better

If an assessment is required, the teacher may have reservations about its value but must still give it and find another way to capture actual knowledge or skill level.

Participants also described assessment validity as a challenge. Shelly and Cathy make similar comments on this topic: when using an assessment, “a big problem or issue would be if ...what I’m trying to assess for is really um what I need to be looking for” (Shelly). As Cathy explained:

Sometimes it’s hard to make sure that like my informal assessments are actually really telling me what the kids know you know that it’s actually really targeted like really specific and like gives me the information that I’m trying to get.

Additional validity concerns relate further to the type of assessment or format of the assessment used. Lynn most clearly expresses this as “sometimes I feel like man, I know they know this but how am I going to get it so that they can show me what they know?” All five participants expressed a desire for greater understanding in this area. Shelly was concerned about using this knowledge to better understand social and content skill acquisition for the “couple of hours a week” in which her students worked with general education peers. Carmen stated that she would “like to learn more about assessments, though- different types,” including “how can you like kind of trick them so I am assessing them but not, them not know that’s what’s happening” and

“project based assessments.” Tricking them appears to be related to reducing negative student affect to get a more reliable assessment.

Carmen also stated a desire to know “what other assessments to use for special ed. ‘cause all you get the whole time is multiple choice. That’s the easiest and best way to go for special ed., but there has to be another way...” These comments provide interesting contradictions. Carmen appears to be explaining the situation in which she knows that other types of formal assessments are available but she does not believe that she is allowed to use them and is stuck with multiple choice summative tests, which are the easiest for her to use within the confines of adapting Chapter tests. She is asking for knowledge of how to incorporate her actual assessment knowledge into the broader perceived requirements of her school or school district.

On a similar topic, Cathy made several comments summarized in the statement “I don’t think that I write a formal assessment very well. I haven’t had a lot of practice in it.” She then explained the need to be able to create this type of test from time to time and being unclear about “whether or not they should be multiple choice or question and answer and like the format.” She explained the desire to write a formal assessment that “would incorporate like a broad range of students and abilities” and that used appropriate language. As she explained, “I don’t want to not expose them to that sort of language but I know that in the tests that they get we spend a lot of time breaking apart the language.” Again, Cathy is explaining the requirement for students to be able to engage in this type of assessment but the challenges of providing access to these tests and the situation in which these tests are not authentic assessments of science knowledge.

Two other challenges were described. Dawn briefly described the difficulty in keeping up with math assessments when changing to a new collaborative team at her school. Even when providing segregated special education services, as Dawn did, there is an expectation that teachers work as a part of a team and coordinate the content or common core standards that are being taught and assessed. The other challenge was described by Shelly in relation to writing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). As she explained, “the IEP is a big assessment piece in itself you know and as much as they prepared you for what an IEP is...we don’t actually do it” before beginning teaching. Shelly explains that although this issue has been resolved for her, she was unclear about how to use assessment to inform IEP goals: “I know that you know it has to meet their needs and be specific but they never show you how to write one.” This concern highlights a possible lack of understanding, at least at the time Shelly began teaching, about how classroom assessment and IEP goals are related. Other participants did not discuss how regular classroom assessment is related to IEP goals.

New Teachers Held Beliefs about the Utility of SEDLP Assessment Preparation

Participants commented on preparation exclusively in the context of what they learned when enrolled in SEDLP coursework and practicum experiences. First, participants commented generally on their preparation coursework: “the dual license program was fantastic...There was several courses that explicitly talked about assessment” (Shelly), “especially my last two semesters probably influenced a lot of the way that I do my assessments” (Cathy), and “I’ve thought about retaking that class, the assessments class, and seeing or even just going to some training or something for it” (Carmen).

Next, participants commented on positive aspects of their preparation program. Lynn had particularly positive comments about an SEDLP faculty member: “he was awesome he talked about all the different forms so he was

very knowledgeable.” She continued to describe the plentiful examples and memorable class discussions and positively characterized her professors as a whole: “they make it sound fun and data collection is fun and so that’s what puts the passion” in assessment preparation. Carmen also explained a positive trait of her professor: “She didn’t do a lot of teaching it was more of us doing teaching so I did like that. That was nice because then you get comfortable with the subject.”

Three participants described their current use of assessment knowledge gained from the SEDLP program. Cathy described a more comprehensive understanding of what assessment is: “before...I wasn’t really aware of the fact that that could be considered an assessment you know before that I thought that it had to be a test. So that definitely influenced me a lot.” She stated an awareness of formal assessment options but not the use of these options in her actual assessment practice. Cathy also explained learning to do informal assessments in the SEDLP: “I feel like I get a much better understanding of what students are learning.” Shelly explained that “I saved all of the stuff from the class ‘cause I refer back to it when you know I need some more ideas or um maybe a method’s not working as well as I would have hoped it would.” This demonstrates the use of SEDLP coursework as an introduction to methods and as a resource for new teacher reference. Shelly listed Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (ABC) charts and Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA) as particularly valuable assessment tools from coursework.

Lynn also explained the effect of preparation on her current assessment organizational practices: “they made it sound like it...doesn’t have to be that takes a ton of time out of your day... it’s really not once you learn...to get different binders or whatever you have to do.” This captures the idea that systematicity as described by the NRC (2008) is presented in SEDLP coursework. The physical details of how to collect and store assessment data are important in that if beginning teachers do not have knowledge of how to set up such systems they may not be able to implement their broader knowledge of assessment concepts in an effective way.

Participants also discussed negative or limited aspects of their assessment preparation. For example, Carmen presented somewhat contradictory statements about her experience: “When I took the assessment class our teacher wasn’t the best. She was good, she wasn’t the best” and “If I retook it I’m hoping I’d get a better teacher that knows what they’re doing.” The contradiction in these statements is present in that even if a teacher is “good” but not the best she should “know what she is doing.” This contradiction may reflect Carmen’s unwillingness to criticize the SEDLP program in an interview by someone who is connected to it and to other people involved in it; nevertheless, an expression of dissatisfaction is intended, as is demonstrated by her continued comments. She states that “I felt like it was more repetitive stuff that we already knew” while also stating a need for more knowledge in this area: “I’ve thought about retaking that class” and “hopefully they’ll give us more...assessments ‘cause we only got a few...and I know there’s a bunch more.” Carmen was able to provide many examples of assessments but may not see these as usable options when actually assessing. This problem is also explained by Cathy:

We focused a lot on how to do informal assessments and ... the hindrance of the like basic test exam thing but that doesn’t make it not a part of school and I feel like maybe that part was you know skipped over because a lot of people have very adverse feelings about it but...it’s still a requirement...I have to do.

Carmen's and Cathy's concern about this suggests that addressing this issue in some way is necessary for preservice teachers who will be working in a middle school environment.

A different type of preparation concern was discussed by Dawn. As she explained, "I felt like we had a strong literacy background I guess in math I felt more weak" because there was less "opportunity to create a math assessment." A list of required SEDLP coursework tends to support this idea. All coursework contains an assessment component, and literacy coursework includes five classes (Children's Literature, Teaching Reading, Teaching Reading in Elementary Education, Teaching Oral and Written Language in Elementary Education, and Differentiating Reading Instruction in Inclusive Settings) while mathematics coursework includes one class (Teaching Math in Elementary Education). It is important to consider whether or not assessment for mathematics is being adequately addressed.

Discussion

New Teacher Perceptions of Competence in Classroom Assessment

Participants described what they understand and can do to assess the progress of students with disabilities. This description included providing complementary definitions of assessment across all participants and the ability of each participant to list or describe many assessment types and strategies. These definitions are consistent with the more formal definitions provided in assessment literature (NRC, 2008; Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 2006). Regarding assessment types, there are some differences between this study and the limited research available in this area. Kohler et al. (2008) found that preservice teachers used primarily two types of formative assessments: "listening to student talk" and "observing student behavior" (p. 2113). The participants of this study were also able to provide specific examples of using other methods, such as exit tickets, journal entries, games, posters, paper folds, and task completion. What extends these behavioral observations beyond the Kohler et al. (2008) conclusions is the focus on measurable behavioral criteria, even in formative assessment. It is possible that the understanding and use of a greater variety of formative assessment methods is a product of participation in the SEDLP.

Competence in implementing summative assessment was an area in which two participants described concerns. As Cathy and Carmen explained, they conduct summative assessment of middle school science units or chapters using tests provided by the textbook publishing company and adapt these tests to meet student needs. Although both participants were able to describe authentic assessments, both stuck to the use of the tests described above as summative assessments. The pressure to assess in a particular manner, although perhaps not directly stated, is present.

There were additional areas of knowledge across participants. Participants described the ability to meet district assessment requirements, to attend to student affect issues during assessment, to broaden the application of an assessment by individualizing or differentiating, and to frequently conduct informal assessments. Participant identification of these items as relevant to their practice may also demonstrate the impact of preparation within the SEDLP.

Within the broad field of classroom assessment, there were also aspects that all or most participants did not describe. For example, participants did not describe historical, legal, or human rights understandings of the role of assessment. One participant (Shelly) commented that her students "deserved" appropriate assessments,

but other than this instance, these concepts were either assumed and not mentioned or not part of participants' assessment constructs. Curriculum-based assessment, curriculum-based measurement and assessment of embedded IEP goals were also absent from participant discussion. Limitations Participants were all in elementary and middle school settings and none of the participants in segregated settings were in classrooms serving students with more severe disabilities. This could limit generalizability across settings. Further, four of five participants identified themselves as Caucasian, which does not reflect the ethnic and racial composition of the people who live in the region in which this study was conducted. A larger, more diverse group of participants may have provided greater variance in perspective. Finally, data is self-reported by participants; therefore, conclusions about actual practice must be limited. Implications for Teacher Preparation One implication from this study is that it is important in teacher preparation programs to address the issue of high stakes standardized assessment. It is critical that preservice teachers understand and can articulate the impact of assessment decisions on content learning because as new teachers they must be able to justify focusing on authentic assessment rather than standardized assessment test-taking practice. Participants in this study struggled with this type of issue when they tried to adapt grade level standardized-test-practice-format summative assessments for classroom use. It would have been useful for them to be able to assert the value of using more authentic assessment.

A second and related assessment implication is that it is important in teacher preparation to address collaborative special education and general education teacher parity issues. Although teachers who provide special education services are part of a collaborative group, study participants revealed that many times special education teachers may not have equal power in navigating curriculum, instructional methods, and assessments. Although they were able to list many options for other assessment formats, participants were not able to implement these methods in practice. Preparation programs can provide special education preservice teachers with methods to positively and assertively communicate with general education peers about assessment options. More direct instruction and practical experience in advocacy may be needed in coursework in this area.

Finally, it may be useful to explore whether or not adequate opportunity is present for preservice special education teachers to learn and practice mathematics assessment. Literacy assessment opportunities may be more easily included across multiple courses than mathematics assessment opportunities and understanding the status of mathematics assessment preparation would benefit teacher preparation as a whole.

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Book Review: Secrets of Great Leaders: 50 ways to make a difference

By Bonnie L. Rosenblum

Secrets of Great Leaders: 50 ways to make a difference. O'Connor, Carol. London, UK: John Murray Learning, 2015. 260. \$14.99.

This book awakens your inner soul as O'Connor presents 50 tips to inspire you to maximize a multitude of leadership abilities and steer colleagues toward success. *Secrets of Great Leaders: 50 ways to make a difference* offers detailed suggestions with real life examples and applicable situations in which they could be implemented. Each of O'Connor's 50 tips is strategically broken down into three components: practical, visionary and connecting to enable the reader to follow the tip from concept to implementation. The author recommends for the reader to identify their personal strengths and weaknesses prior to embarking on this journey. Then, skip around the book and read the tips that are most applicable to strengthening their individual needs. Establishing mindfulness of each tip will facilitate leadership building skills in the order by which the reader establishes.

O'Connor wrote *Secrets of Great Leaders: 50 ways to make a difference* with the intention of assisting leaders across a multitude of industries in strengthening their leadership skills. The author believes "everyone can work smarter, regardless of previous achievement levels or professional training" (O'Connor, 2015, p.21). Many of the tips include suggestions for leaders to empower colleagues to work smarter and take risks to stimulate growth. Tip #16 Build people up and Tip #38 Learn from everyone and everything, recommend leaders regularly attend networking gatherings both alone and with colleagues, at times. O'Connor continues to advise leaders to mention positive attributes about colleagues when introducing them to new contacts. The unsolicited comments will boost their level of confidence and inspire them. In return, providing a platform of gratitude and motivating them to remain loyal and reciprocate the kindness in the future. The author states that "people never forget the person who made a difference in their lives and encouraged them to believe they could do and be more" (O'Connor, 2015, p.166). "Building people up may not be part of your job description, but it is a very satisfying experience and makes your own work easier. You are indirectly preparing colleagues for delegation and the assumption of more complex tasks" (O'Connor, 2015, p. 81) while creating a successful work environment. O'Connor's leadership secrets follow closely to those of Fullan. Both experts encourage leaders to actively build relationships with colleagues in an effort to facilitate positive growth within their organization. Fullan believes, as does O'Connor, "your leadership in a culture of change will be judged as effective or ineffective not by who you are as a leader but by what leadership you produce in others" (Fullan, 2001, p.137).

O'Connor advises leaders to set high standards, follow the rules they establish, and respect their peers in order to receive respect in return. "Decide whether you would follow you" (O'Connor, 2015, p.108). She offers strategies for staying the course while remaining authentic. Fullan and O'Connor share similar qualities within their leadership strategies. According to Fullan, successful leaders share the attributes which include "integrity, reliability, moral excellence, a sense of purpose, firmness of conviction, steadiness, and unique qualities of style

and substance that differentiate them from others” (Fullan, 2001, p.14). “At the loftiest level, moral purpose is about how humans evolve over time, especially in relation to how they relate to each other” (Fullan, 2001, p.14). Once a leader establishes the standards for the organization, their “strongly held beliefs will fuel the drive to succeed and may even keep (their) self-doubt to a minimum” (O’Connor, 2015, p.153). O’Connor elaborates on the need to stay focused and never give up. Determination and deeply held beliefs will encourage a leader to move her organization, and colleagues, toward a successful outcome. As eloquently stated by Margaret Mead, “never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” (O’Connor, 2015, p.152)

In Tip #18 Disrupt the status quo, O’Connor suggests leaders accomplish this by “shak(ing) things up a bit...encourage disruption, as a pilot for change, to innovate, monitor and evaluate progress” (O’Connor, 2015, p.90). This is an excellent strategy as corroborated by Fullan where he states “disturb them in a manner that approximates the desired outcome...the ultimate goal in chaotic societies is to achieve greater reigning in” (Fullan, 2001, p. 109). These “unsettling processes provide the best route to greater all-around coherence...the most powerful coherence is the function of having worked through the ambiguities and complexities of hard-to-solve problems” (Fullan, 2001, p.116). Fullan and O’Connor jointly suggest that creating chaos is a key component to successful change within an organization.

Be approachable, make friends, give people a second chance and most importantly make people your main business. O’Connor emphasizes the importance of taking an interest in your colleagues, learning basic information about their lives and providing face to face contact with them on a daily basis. “If you are an approachable person, colleagues will informally explain what is going on, or wrong, in the company. You in turn listen quietly...if the colleague’s concerns are serious, you can start addressing them (O’Connor, 2015, p. 170).” Making friends improves the success of this strategy. Dale Carnegie, a well-known writer and lecturer, additionally agrees with the strategy proposed by O’Connor. In his book *How to win friends and influence people*, he states “You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you.” (Carnegie, 2009, p. 54). Historically, the most successful leaders realize that the key to success is to make more leaders, not followers. The secret is to take an interest in them and nurture the process. As stated by the famous American businessman and founder of Firestone Tire and Rubber Company, Harvey S. Firestone, “The growth and development of people is the highest calling of leadership” (Firestone, 2015).

I believe this book effectively offers relevant strategies for improving leadership skills. It provides specific examples in a “how to” format which allows the reader to skip around to the specific tips which are most applicable to their leadership struggles. With that said, I feel the book would have benefited from a final chapter to provide closure. A consolidated summarization of the tips as applied to various situations would have wrapped the book up more effectively rather than ending after Tip 50. O’Connor implies that the final tip is the summation of the previous 49, although I would have still preferred a final wrap-up section. Overall, *Secrets of Great Leaders: 50 ways to make a difference* is an excellent resource to develop and strengthen leadership skills.

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Carol O'Connor is the owner and leader of Vision in Practice, Ltd, a company that specializes in leadership, communication and innovation. She holds a PhD in educational psychology from University of California, Santa Barbara. Born and raised in the United States, then relocating to London, U.K., Carol actively consults and coach's clients from across the globe. She focuses on the causes of the problems to identify the appropriate strategies for long-term solutions. Carol O'Connor has published eight successful books which address strategies for improving businesses and leadership.

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Buzz from the Hub

All articles below can be accessed through the following links:

<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-july2018-issue2/>

The theme of this *Buzz* is the data of the day, which tell a story of “now” but also help us prepare and plan for where and how to bring our parent voices to bear on shaping the educational and community landscape in which we live.

[The 101 Guide To Telling a Compelling Story With Data](#)

Walk through the eight steps it takes to tell a compelling story through data.

[2018 KIDS COUNT Data Book](#)

The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s annual data book gives us information on national and state-level data on 16 key indicators of child well-being within the domains of economic well-being, education, health, and family and community. States are ranked, best to worst, on overall child well-being, and on each of the four domains.

[Opportunity for All? Technology and Learning in Lower-Income Families](#)

This report presents the results of the first nationally-representative telephone survey of lower-income parents on issues related to digital connectivity. How connected are they? And how are they connected?

[The Direct Support Workforce and People with Intellectual, Developmental, and Other Disabilities](#)

This issue of IMPACT examines the workforce challenges in our long-term care system and their consequences. It presents data on the direct support workforce; shares personal stories of what is and isn’t working for those delivering and receiving supports; looks at creative actions being taken around the country to address workforce issues; and explores ways to ensure that quality supports are there for people with disabilities and their families in all our communities.

[2018 State Determination Letters from OSERS](#)

The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services released State determinations on how well each state is implementing IDEA for babies and toddlers with disabilities (birth through 2) and for school-aged children (Part B). Just 21 states received the “meets requirements” designation in an annual compliance review. How did your state do?

[State-level Statistics and Fact Facts](#)

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is an excellent resource to consult for education data at both the [national](#) and [state](#) levels. The [back-to-school data](#) are especially interesting!

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Book Review: Leading a Culture of Change

By Nathalie Diaz

The book by author Michael Fullan *Leading a Culture of Change* is a philosophical journey into the world of educational leadership that derives from a business model perspective and connects those points to an educational leader perspective as a school administrator. Fullan in his book provides examples from top leading companies in America and discusses how these companies collaborate and take on their leadership roles in running corporations and how that same concept can be applied to our schools.

Thesis statement: This book provides insights to the world of school leadership and administration by sharing the following outcomes. The importance of a school principal to have these qualities of moral purpose, enthusiasm, knowledge and creation of sharing, relationship building, coherence making and being a collaborative team player (Fullan, pg. 4). This also includes taking leadership to a new level by taking the education field by storm as business people run their corporations.

The first chapter *A Remarkable Convergence* discusses Fullan's viewpoint from simple to complex ideas of educational leadership. The book delves into topics from theories of knowledge used in critical situations. For example, to become an effective leader it is critical that the leader continues to learn and develop from different opportunities in order to be an effective leader. Effective leaders create their effectiveness when they continually work on these five components of educational leadership. These 5 characteristics include having moral purpose, developing relationships in a professional manner, fostering knowledge and striving for coherence with energy, enthusiasm and hopefulness.

Chapter 2 *Moral Purpose* discusses the importance of making a difference in the lives of many students and other educational professionals. This means and end is extremely important as school principals represent themselves and their persona through their beliefs and ideas. As Fullan expressed in his text "you don't have to be Mother Teresa"

(Fullan, pg.13). This means for some individuals that some are extremely passionate about what they do while others just take it, as it's just a profession. In this chapter explains that educational leaders have to go above and beyond to be extremely committed to betterment and grow in moral purpose daily.

Chapter 3 *Understanding change* discusses how strategies and innovation ideas about changing leadership strategies in schools. According to Kotter's leading change. He discusses and mentions an eight-step process for initiating top down transformation ideas (Fullan, pg. 32). The sections are divided into eight parts: establishing a sense of urgency, creating a coalition guide, creating a vision and strategy, communicating a change vision, board action, consolidating gains and producing more change and looking into new culture approaches with others. Fullan also explains in his book the critical importance of evaluating and understanding change as an administrator focuses on goals to not just be innovative, the best ideas are just not enough, learn to appreciate implementations, redefine resistance, continue to reculturate and a checklist is not enough but to always keep

complexity as the name of the game. These aspects are key components to guiding effective leadership strategies and supports when dealing with multiple changes and situations that can arise within the school and the community.

It is difficult to implement and employ different strategies sequentially and from different aspects. However, as principals it is important to change processes and insights by evaluating wisdom through different leadership models.

Chapter 4 discusses the importance of relationships and maintaining moral purpose as a large portion of organizational success in schools. Businesses are compared with the way schools should be ran in order to maintain positive relationships and remove negative feelings in the workplace. According to Lewin and Regine, “relationships are not just a product of networking but genuine relationships based on authenticity and care” (Fullan, pg. 52). This highlights the importance of keeping positive and open communications when working and collaborating with others while maintaining a positive relationship with other educators. Relationships should examine different perspectives and change throughout the development and growth of educators and principals as they embrace the dedication of their work ethic to the education of all children.

In chapter 5 Fullan makes the comparison of knowledge building with other corporations and large executive companies. The author embraces the saying “knowledge is power” (Fullan, pg. 78). Which is very true in the eyes of educators and principals. It is also discussed to examine the importance of highlighting knowledge not just as what we know but to continue to explore beyond our minds with technology experiences in the classroom. As principals, their role is to continue learning and discovering different ways to make teaching and learning a worthwhile experience using technology in the classroom and sharing their knowledge with others. Principals need to maintain in their minds that effective leaders work on making their teaching contexts and environments different to support diverse learning and cultural experiences for all students.

Chapter 6 as described by Fullan discusses the topic of Coherence Making. As effective leaders principals are encouraged to make adjustments and review reform policies and not be afraid of making innovative ideas within their schools. Schools across the states are facing several reform policies and procedural changes and all of these laws affect the way schools are managed. As Fullan mentions, experimentation, rapid learning and using different strategies can support schools facing a slump of changes that can impact the school and community (Fullan, pg. 110). Principals should consider making prominent decisions and implement them based on their ideas and also discuss in collaboration with others their strengths and needs. They also need to believe in their plan of action and let it go as part of the leadership plan that will be able to support the needs of the school.

It is imperative that principals consider these two concepts when discussing coherence making with other staff members and faculty self organizing and working with strange attractive feelings. Principals have to maintain distance with these two terms but also need to allow for others to think freely and just trust in their staff and faculty to make a difference in their school community.

Chapter 7 The Hare and the Tortoise examine the story of the fable. The rabbit claims himself to be powerful and mighty because he can run faster than the turtle but the turtle seems to be wiser and adapts to make

changes to be able to win the race. The same rules apply for educational leaders. According to Fullan, effective leaders listen attentively, while ineffective leaders make premature decisions without adding too much thought (Fullan, pg. 124). This basically defines that educational leaders must continue to embrace learning and the changes that arise with being a school principal. Some decisions are easier than others but it takes the right form of leadership and moral character values to define the right decisions for your school community. In order for principals to continue to grow the following skills are necessary for professional development:

Intervisitation, Monthly principal support groups, Principal peer coaching, supervisory walkthroughs, district institutes, principal study groups and individualized coaching experiences. All of these diverse learning experiences embrace different styles of learning and also provide principals mentors to be able to support them and their ideas of leadership when making prominent decisions to effective teaching and learning within educational leadership.

Weak points:

- The author provides vague examples of leadership and makes strange analogies when it comes to school leadership in my opinion.
- It is difficult to comprehend the mindset of running a school as if it were a business. This takes various reads to be able to understand this comparison in the book.

Strong points:

- The author highlights critical points and provides theory examples of ways that principals can be effective within their schools.
- The book enforces the topic of collaboration and breaks down different ways principals and educators can collaborate together to make their jobs easier.
- The author embraces the culture of change and highlights the importance that in the education world policies and procedures are always changing. It is important to comprehend that in knowledge we are always growing and taking different mindsets and opinions. Principals are expected to do the same be open to change and embrace the differences that make schools unique.

The book I decided to compare and contrast with Fullan's, is *Transforming School Culture: How to Overcome Staff Division*, Solution by Dr. Anthony Muhammad. In this book, the author presents his study of 34 schools he examined. The breakdown is as follows 11 elementary schools, 14 middle schools and 9 high schools from around the United States. In his research, he discovers that principals are stressed and how culture implements and plays an important role in the growth and faculty diversity that can be found within a school. In this book the theory of change and innovation is presented with highlighting the different members that make up the school community in his study. He names these members are the believers, who are people that are committed to learning and that they can make a difference through their teaching and learning experiences. The fundamentalists who care about their status more than anything else, The Tweeners, who are people who are new to a school and want to make a difference by learning and immersing themselves in the culture of the community and lastly, survivors who are people that have been working at a specific school for years and work tirelessly to make it through the day by doing what they need to get accomplished. Comparing this book to our textbook it has similarities in the format in which modern culture and change paves the way to achieving

leadership success and explains the makeup of the school community. This book also highlights important features such as implications for best practices for all types of faculty members to be able to excel in the classroom and improve student performance. In contrast this book shares different perspectives in which the collaborative team in schools differs to Fullan's example of different ways of collaborating with other faculty and staff members. Our textbook examines the importance of being open minded, collaborating as a team player and being an effective listener and team player to support the students and their learning experiences.

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About the Author

From a very young age, Nathalie always knew she wanted to make a difference in education. My parents always worked hard by example and dedicated their time to demonstrate the example of being a professional and a well-rounded lady. Today, Nathalie is a teacher at Key Biscayne K-8 center and works with students of varying exceptionalities of all levels. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood education and holds two graduate degrees from Florida International University in Reading Education and Special Education. I aspire to continue writing throughout my career. It is important that I continue inspiring others through great lessons, engaging experiences and lead by example as an exceptional teacher for children and college students someday.

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For Parents: Your Child Needs Your Involvement in the School Life

By Sarah AL-Sharif

Abstract

When parents develop a good working relationship with the teachers, they feel supported in their parenting. When a parent feels like she or he has another person who shares the good and the down times of her child makes the parent feel supported. It helps them to reduce their anxiety especially when the children are young. The teacher makes it feel like it is the extended family taking care of the child. A parent always needs someone to talk to about the child any time she has concerns. Having a good relationship with the teacher helps to achieve this. In addition, the relationship helps the parents to develop knowledge and skills. It is clear that parents have been with their children raising them (George & Elshtain, 2010). Therefore, they have an adequate amount of information about them. However, there are some skills that they do not know about their children development.

Introduction

I believe that the benefits of family involvement outweigh the barriers. There are three dimensions in the benefits of the family involvement. There are benefits to the child, to the parent, and to the teacher. The first benefit that the child gets when there is family involvement in school is security. The bond between the child and the parent is an important thing to the life of a child. Since the parents raise the child since they are young, their bond makes the children comfortable. When the child joins school, she feels more secure when the parents and the teacher have a good relationship. The first step the teacher takes is to develop a relationship with the child. At the same time, the teacher should be building a relationship with the family. Additionally, the child feels her self-worth when her family has a good relationship with the teacher (Gestwicki, 2011). The interaction with the teachers enables them to have more skills and therefore develop their parenthoods. Involvement in the children learning helps the parents enhance their esteem. Constant engagement in the school life of a child makes the parents feel confident about themselves in their job of parenting (Gestwicki, 2011).

Definition of The Family

A family consists of a group of people that have an affiliation by birth, by marital relationship or by co-residence. Additionally, people may be a family by a combination of the above-mentioned affiliations (George & Elshtain, 2010). The immediate families include sisters, brothers, spouses, daughters, and sons. The families that consist of parents and their children who are not married are called nuclear families. The extended family consists of the nuclear family plus grandparents, uncles, aunties, cousins, nieces, and nephews. The family is the institution that facilitates socialization of children. It plays a significant role in enculturation of the children. The role of the parents is to procreate helping in the socialization of their children. Families have existed since a long time ago as we can remember. Intermarriages and procreation have enabled the continuation of the household from the past (Corbett & Tasmanian, 2004). However, although the existence of family has been constant for a long time, the

definition of the word has been changing with time. All families have some similar characteristics, but also have many differences. Family members are committed to each other. First, the married couples show commitment for each other. Family members mostly put the needs of their fellow family members first before dealing with other people on the outside. Healthy families choose to conduct the activities that strengthen the family, thus, making the members grow closer to each other. Secondly, families mostly spend time together. The time taken by these families together is important just like the activities they choose (Corbett & Tasmanian, 2004). Many families in the modern times do not value meal time together. Most of the families set aside times when they can all meet even when it comes to extended families. Most members of the family value family gatherings that happen at specific times of the year, especially during holidays and important events like birthdays (Kalman, 2009). Another important aspect that is common to all families is communication. Most members of families listen to each other and give support when needed. Children and their parents should all listen to each other. Communication is important in solving conflicts, which are common in all families. Families also appreciate each other. It is important for all the family members to respect one another and appreciate the accomplishments of other members (Kalman, 2009). Although not all the families are religious, most families feel that spirituality is important. Parents are expected to give moral teachings to their children about differentiating between the right actions and the bad ones. Most families also can cope with their problems together (Kalman, 2009). Sometimes families face crisis situations. The cases may be large or small but, most families can find their solutions together.

Although the above-mentioned characteristics show that families are the same, all families are still different. Each person is different from any other person in the world. Even people in the same family are different. Even when one takes a closer look at identical twins, he or she can notice that there is a slight difference between them. A family has a father, mother, and their children. However, the attitudes that the parents raise their children with is different. Parents come from different cultures and backgrounds. Thus, it is obvious that they would have a different expectation for their families and varying personalities (Newman & Grauerholz, 2002). These factors lead to the dynamic factors of a family. Families are also different in their composition and other factors. Some families are young meaning that the parents got married at young ages. Some get married when they are relatively older.

Some families have only a single parent due to misfortunes like divorces and deaths. Additionally, some couples have many children; some have only one child while others have no children at all. Some families have their children while others choose to adopt children and other take children from the foster system. (Kalman, 2009). Some kids live with the members of their extended families like grandparents, aunts, or uncles. All the factors show how families are different. In addition to these differences, some families have sisters, brothers, mothers, and fathers that do not relate to them by blood. Sometimes, parents from one family separate and the individuals find other partners that they have families with. Thus, this gives the kids from the original families, step sisters, step brothers and step parents (Baker & LeTendre, 2005). Thus, this adds to the dynamics of families. Over the past decades, families have changed both positively and negatively. In the past decades, family members used to live with each other. Families knew the whereabouts of each other. They cared more and showed more compassion. During those times, there were many family activities, and even the children took part in them.

During those times, families work together for them to survive (Kalman, 2009). The extended families had a great bond during those times. Nowadays, all that happened in the past has been changing

drastically (Baker & LeTendre, 2005). Family members do not have time for each other because everyone is busy doing their work (Hayes et al., 2010). Technology has worsened the situation. People no longer feel the need to see each other physically because of devices such as mobile phones that help them to communicate every day. Today, most men and women in families work outside their homes even as opposed to long ago when women would be expected to be house wives and conduct house chores. Family values have also changed especially the morals. Nowadays, parents are too busy to take time and teach their children what is right and wrong. Children no longer value education as they did before. Some do not respect their elders (Hayes et al., 2010). In the modern times, children can do many things without the knowledge of their parents. This is because they mostly see each other during weekends. Most of them prefer to spend their leisure time with their friends other than their brothers and sisters. Technology has been a significant factor in the changes because even at homes people spend more time on their mobile phones and iPads rather than talk to each other about their daily activities (Hayes et al., 2010). Another thing that has changed in families is that the numbers of divorce cases have increased over time. In the modern times, marriages do not last. Only a few people manage to hold on to their marriages for a long time, especially for the couples who are getting married in the present (Hayes et al., 2010).

Additionally, families continue to be smaller as people prefer to have few children now. Some prefer to live without children in their lives (Hayes et al., 2010). Various societal trends have an influence on the nature of families today. One of these trends includes the advancement in science and technology (Cliquet, 2003). Modern technology has developed, and with the reduction in the cost of buying televisions and mobile phones, the nature of families has changed. The attitude and expectations have changed. The modern contraceptive methods have come to change the fertility levels of women in the society. Procedures like medical abortions have contributed to the same. Thus, the number of children in families has reduced drastically. Secondly, the HIV/AIDs epidemic has been an influencing factor in the nature of modern family. The prevalence of this disease has had a significant effect on the life of the families today (Cliquet, 2003). Many children have been orphaned when their parents die due to HIV/AIDS. Thus, these kids end up living and under the care of the extended family members like their grandparents, uncles, and aunts. Some of these children are taken by the foster care system. Some children who are sibling sometimes separate and do not see each other for a long time when they are put under such regimes. Some kids are left to suffer from the disease when their parents pass on (Cliquet, 2003). Globalization also has a significant influence on the nature of the modern family. Globalization is an economic phenomenon that increases the relationship between countries through increasing international trade. Also, it improves the social interaction between people. The spread of science such as the introduction of effective contraception is due to globalization. Additionally, there have been intermarriages of people who come from different cultures. In today's families, children belong to different cultures within one family, and this enhances peace in the world (Cliquet, 2003).

Today's Children and the Family

Marital instability is one of the trending factors in the modern families. Many children in this era are raised by single parents resulting from divorces or birth among unmarried women. It is shocking that between 1970 and 2012, the number of children being raised by single parents doubled. This means that the number of divorces increased and the birth rate among unmarried women also increased. In 1940, there were only approximately 3% of births outside wedlock. (Cliquet, 2003). Currently above 40% of the births happening annually are those of unmarried women. Some single parents do a good job when

raising their children. However, the children might have some behavioural and emotional problems due to lack of one parent. Also, having one parent reduces the capital that the family has to live (Cliquet, 2003). It is sad to learn that about 22% of the children in America live in poverty. Shockingly, the United States becomes the leading country with the highest number of poor children in the world (Cliquet, 2003). Poverty has negative effects on those children who have only mothers as their parents. Children below the age of six years living with their mothers are five times more likely to be poor as compared to those with both parents. Those living with their fathers are two and a half more likely to be poor as compared to those with both parents. It is sad to learn that poor children are everywhere regardless of the race, including those children who do not have or live with any parents (Hayes et al., 2010). This decade has been surprising because it has had the most number of poverty in the families headed by women. More than 40% of these families live in poverty conditions. With the women below the age of 30 years, the rate of poor children is even higher (Baker & LeTendre, 2005). These poverty conditions have been contributed by the failure of fathers to pay child support for their children. Surprisingly, only half of the families with single parents have acquired the support orders and only half of them receive the financial support. Quarter of them receive partial payments while the other quarter receive nothing. Families have also been affected by the change in gender of both men and women. Nowadays, most women struggle with balancing being a woman and being an employee or business person (Baker & LeTendre, 2005).

They have to take care of the chores at home and still go to work. Most women report to be feeling very exhausted when they come home in the evening. Most of them try to make sure that they contribute to the needs of the family. It is surprising that many women would not give up their work even if finances were not an issue. (Hayes et al., 2010). The roles of men in the families have also changed. With the changes in the modern family, it is expected that fathers help in the household chores. The days where men used to sit and wait for dinner to be served are gone (Baker & LeTendre, 2005). The father is expected sometimes to help cooking or to play with the children. The changes that taking place have been brought about by the mothers.

With their busy daily schedules, fathers are forced to take more responsibility of the family. Some dads even become stay at home dads, as their wives go to work (Newman & Grauerholz, 2002). The change in male roles is pleasing because having men more involved with their families and children makes the families better. It is expected that with the current level of education and career goals, the size of the families will decrease (Gestwicki, 2011). In the last century, the family size in American has reduced from about 4.76 persons to about 2.58 (Gestwicki, 2011). This is due to the reduction in the number of children births in households. The education and career goals have led to delayed child bearing and marriages. In addition, the economic difficulties of raising a child have led to the reduction in family size (Gestwicki, 2011). All these factors continue to be serious in this generation. Therefore, the size of the family is expected to go down even further because the levels of educations are rising as well as the career goals. There are couples who prefer not to have any children at all. If the trend continues, it would be alarming because more children need to be born in the world. Parents have continued to have difficulties due to the increased rates of social changes. Many parents would like their children to be like them. However, the generations are changing, and it has become a tough challenge to help their children through the changes (Newman & Grauerholz, 2002). The parents live in yesterday's world while trying to raise their children in the current world.

This is a challenging thing to do with the world images changing. All the adjustments in life make the parents not sure about what to do worrying about almost everything that surrounds them. It is expected that in the current world, parents worry about the influence of the internet on their children and other societal challenges such as drug abuse (Gestwicki, 2011). Most of them are trying to keep a balance by giving their children the freedom to make their own decisions and at the same time, prevent them from falling into the social evils in the world today (Baker & LeTendre, 2005). In general, the American family life has changed and will continue to change. The rates of divorce, cohabitation and remarriages have increased over the years. Also, the households containing two parents have been on a decline. Families have been decreasing in size because of delays in marriages or child birth. Also, the existence of many single-parent households and reduction in the levels of fertility has led to this decline (Gestwicki, 2011). Today, many women give birth without necessarily being married. The structure of the family has also changed with the roles of both men and women altering. Women should find the balance in their work and at homes. Dads are now more involved with their families and tend to spend more time with their families and help in some chores. Parents are raising their children in difficult situations because of the increased rates of social changes (Baker & LeTendre, 2005). The family is expected to change even more in the future because of the growing technology and changes in people's beliefs and attitudes. The most saddening thing about these situations is the number of children living in poor conditions.

American parents should really work on the support system of their children. No child should be living in poor conditions having parents who can support him or her (Gestwicki, 2011). Family is a group of people brought together by either blood or marriage ties. Family consists of the nuclear and the extended family. The nuclear family comprises of the two parents and their children. The extended family consist of other people such as grandparents, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, and cousins. Other people who are not related by blood join by marriage. Therefore, the extended family could include mothers-in-law, fathers-in-law, sisters-in-law, and brothers-in-law (Baker & LeTendre, 2005). A family is like no other means that families are different. The composition and the structures of families are different. Some families consist of only the wife and the husband with no children. Others consist of the parents and the children. The structures of the families are different. Some families only have single parents. There are many single mums and single dads raising their children in the current world (Gestwicki, 2011).

On the other hand, some children have both of their parents in their family. Some parents choose to adopt children while others have their blood children. Some families have parents who are not the biological ones. This may be as a result of divorces or deaths. The relationships between the family members also differ. In some families, members are close to one another and they spend most of their time together (Kalman, 2009). In others, the situation is different. The members may not be close to each other and they may not be around each other most of the time. Families also have different socioeconomic statuses. Some families are poor; others are in middle class while others live in poverty. A family is like some other families means that one family can share some certain traits with other families (Gestwicki, 2011). For example, a family can have two parents and three children; two boys and one girl. If another family has the same number of people with similar traits, the two families are the same in their composition. Additionally, if a family has a single mum and two children and another has the same, they are similar. Some families may be similar to others in their socioeconomic status. There are many families that share the same socioeconomic status. If two families belong to the middle class, they are the same in their socioeconomic status. Some families are also the same in their religious beliefs. For instance, some are

Christians, some Muslims, Buddhists and other religions. Two families whose belief is Islam are the same in terms of their religious background (Gestwicki, 2011). A family is like all other families means that there are those characteristics that all the families share. First, all families are bound together by either blood or marriage or adoption (Gestwicki, 2011). In all the families, the members are all bound by the above-mentioned factors. The second factor that is in all families is love. All the families love each other. The love that they share makes them care for each other and enables them to support one another whenever necessary. Secondly, all the families spare some time to spend with each other. Families may have different times they spend time with each other, but at some point, they should come together. Most of the families spend their holidays and celebrations together such as birthday parties. Family members share a bond that they do not have with people from outside and they ensure that they are there for each other (Kalman, 2009).

Examples of Government Mandated Parent Involvement

Head Start- this a program that provides early childhood health, education, nutrition, and parent involvement to those families with low income. This program ensures that the parents are involved in the education of their children at a young age. They have programs that require the participation of the parents.

Title I- this is an elementary and secondary school act that gives support to schools with high number if children whose families have low income and to local education agencies. Each program that would be funded by this act had to have family involvement. The act gives some responsibilities to parents which they must follow.

Educations of Disabled Children- Parents should be involved if their children have a disability. However, parents have the right to speak up if they feel like their children have not been diagnosed correctly. However, if their children have any disabilities, they have the responsibility of planning their education.

Child care and Development Block Grants- it lays the foundation of providing affordable and safe child care. The provisions highlight the importance of family involvement in the process. The parents have the right to help formulate the child care policies and standards.

No child Left behind legislation- these also ensures that there is family and parental involvement. It ensures that every child is taking care of and is treated fairly. Parents whose children do not perform very well in a particular school have the right transfer their children to other schools they feel is better. This is also true if the school does not meet the required standards (Gestwicki, 2011).

BENEFITS OF FAMILY INVOLVEMENT FOR PARENTS, TEACHERS, CHILDREN, AND SCHOOLS

Parents have various benefits for their involvement in the school activities for their children. They feel more confident about their parenting skills. They feel that their parenting is being supported by the presence of the teachers. Additionally, they increase their level of knowledge and skills. Their participation in the school life of their children's life helps them to boost their esteem (Kalman, 2009). Teachers increase their effectiveness when they have a relationship with the parents of their teachers.

Also, teachers add to their knowledge, which helps them to enable the children to attain their goals. The relationship with the parents helps them to boost their confidence especially when they receive positive feedback. Parental involvement helps to add more resources to the learning experience (Kalman, 2009). Children have the most benefits because the relationship between the teachers and the parents is for their benefit.

The partnership helps them to improve their grades in school. They are more confident when they have their parents involved in their school life. They develop positive attitude towards their education, therefore, they have good behaviour and conduct. In future, these children are less likely to drop out of school. Schools also benefit from a positive teacher-parent relationship. If they manage to develop these positive relationships, they tend to have better reputations in the community. Additionally, they receive better support from the community. The schools with these programs do better than those that do not (Gestwicki, 2011). Some potential barriers to the development of effective teacher-family partnerships. One of the potential barriers is different ways of viewing and approaching things. Therefore, the teacher and the parent may not see eye to eye about some things hindering a positive relationship. Teachers hesitate to communicate with the parents because they feel like it takes too much time. They also fear that some parents may be too dominant with their children in the classroom. It is natural that a parent feels that they should have the greatest control over their child and this may intimidate the teachers. In relation to this, another factor that is a potential barrier is power sharing. Teachers feel that the classroom is their territory. Therefore, they become reluctant to share these powers with the parents. Some teachers feel like they should avoid the parents for them not to be criticized. This happens especially when the teacher is young and does not have enough experience in the classroom (Gestwicki, 2011)

Teacher Attitudes are Conducive to Forming Partnerships with Parents

One of the things that the teachers should do before forming partnership with parents is to examine their attitudes towards various culture and ethnicities. They are supposed to evaluate then change the way they think about how families should behave or be. This is an attitude of acceptance. It may be a difficult thing to do for the teachers, but it is necessary to form a conducive partnership with the parents. Part of this means identifying stereotypes and knows the purpose and finding a way in which one can deal with it and deal with the differences. Doing this means that the teacher has an attitude of openness to others. Teachers should evaluate what makes them feel uncomfortable and be clear about their values and goals (Gestwicki, 2011).

Understanding and accepting the cultures and beliefs of other people does not necessarily mean that they should go against their own. In addition, the teacher should have an accepting attitude, in that, they should accept they should share the decision-making process with the parents. By doing this, the relationship between them and the parents is guaranteed to be positive (Baker & LeTendre, 2005).

External Factors are Important in Laying the Foundation for Partnerships with Families

One of these external factors is time. Both the teachers and the parents have time constraints. Both of these parties have work to do and may not have the time to interact. This may be a barrier. However, in the modern day, people do not have to meet to communicate. The second factor is busyness. Parents and teachers may be busy with activities in their daily lives and may not meet with each other or interact. In

this case, to have an effective partnership, it is crucial for them to plan their schedule and find some space to interact. The third factor is the old ideas of family involvement. This factor is important because it may be a hindrance of the parent-teacher relationship. The modern times are different from the past. Some people still believe in the old patterns of family involvement and may cause barriers. An administrative policy is the next factor. This is an important aspect that affects the relationship between parents and teachers. Some of the schools do not allow the interaction between teachers and parents and this becomes a big hindrance. The last factor is personal problems. Personal problems are an important factor because they can hinder the interaction. The parents and the teachers need to work on these personal issues to ensure that the interactions are successful (Gestwicki, 2011).

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory Support Family Involvement

The ecological system theories support the microsystem. It is the immediate surroundings of the child. The parents are the closest people that the child has. The development of a child is affected the most by the people who are in his or her immediate surroundings (Newman & Grauerholz, 2002). The close surroundings include even their school. This shows the importance of the relationship between the parents and the teachers. This is because both of them have an important role to play in the lives of the child. They determine the kind of person the child will be and the development that the child will have to go through. Therefore, if the family of the child have a positive influence on the child, the child is likely to have a positive development. Likewise, if the child goes to school and has a positive influence on the teacher, the development will also be positive. Also, this involvement will affect the education of the children. Therefore, the theory supports family involvement in the school curriculum of the child (Gestwicki, 2011).

Using Documentation to Communicate with Families & the Contribution of Documentation to the Quality of Early Childhood Education

Parent involvement in the education of a child helps them in their development both in school and life. Documentation is one of the methods used to increase family involvement in the child's education. A documentation panel is a gathering of some parents and some children who showcase the photographs, diction and artwork of children linked with information from books, curriculum webs and education captions (Zygmunt-Fillwalk & Huffman, 2012). I think that I will use documentation panels to communicate with the parents about the learning about their children. When teachers using this method put captions on the work, they help the parents to understand how the children learn. One of the reasons I plan to use documentation panel is because it is a way of countering the challenge of developing communication between school and home. It is a unique way of highlighting learning in the classroom. I will use them to communicate various issues and concepts to the parents. Additionally, it is an effective method for children of all ages starting from infants to those in elementary schools.

Additionally, **Documentation panels** are better than other methods of communication such as such as parent workshops and newsletters (Brown-DuPaul, Keyes & Segatti, 2001). This is because; the two methods have their drawbacks. Parents' workshops may not work because the parents may lack adequate time to visit schools due to their busy schedules. Parents may discard newsletters or fail to read them

completely. The parents whose formal language is not English may be disadvantaged. The documentation panels are more effective because they bring they brings parents to class and form an interactive format. Parents have an attraction to the nature of the panels having a visual appeal and the work samples and photographs of the children. The discussion between the child and the parent makes the parents more involved in the education. In addition to interaction with children, this strategy will help me interact with the parents when they ask me questions about the education of their children (Brown-DuPaul, Keyes & Segatti, 2001). The relationship between the school and home is strengthened when the parents spend their time in school. Thus, holding documentation panels help in achieving more ready communication than other methods. Using documentation panel will help me clarify my understanding of student learning because I must convey information in a succinct manner. When creating a documentation panel, I will decide on the most appropriate items I will use to communicate to parents. I will also provide supporting evidence of the material. I will ensure that the material is attractive but does not deflect the panel from its purpose. I will also ensure that I come up with question that makes the panel engaging. There are various methods of using technology to communicate with families and enhance the home-school relationship. One of the best ways of using technology is build a classroom website that all the parents can access. Talking from experience, a website is the most effective ways of engaging parents. In the website, the teacher can post notifications about any events happening at school (Mitchell, Foulger & Wetzel, 2009). For the families to understand the process in which the children learn, it is important that the teacher posts some series of photos in the website. Additionally, it is important to create a feature where parents can give their responses about what is happening in class. A discussion forum in the website helps to channel the ideas about children learning. The second method is sending individualized e-mails to parents about the progress of individual children. This helps the family to know how the child is fairing in education and share any ideas of how the child might be helped to develop.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

As a teacher, I have an experience using parent-teacher conferences as a way of involving families in school work. I used various strategies to ensure that the conference was successful. 10 days before the day of the conference, I sent an email to each parent to inform them about the conference and its purpose. I ensured that I confirmed my schedule with other teachers in case some parents had more than one child in the school. I gathered some files of the children and came up with some issues that would be discussed during the conference. During the conference, I welcomed the parents with open and warm arms. I provided the parents with information concerning their academics. I welcomed additional information from the parents and I ensured that I listened to them well. When coming up with a work plan, I combined their observations to my perceptions and asked them for more ideas. I was careful when giving negative information to them. I started with some positive information while moving to the positive information.

I avoided comparing students amongst each other or blaming their parents and caregivers for the problems of their children. After the conference, I wrote down some things that I learnt. I used the notes to gather my thoughts and figure out what I would do in the next conference. I also did some follow up calls to the parents even to those that did not attend the conference. I asked them if we could hold personal meetings some time. I avoided most of the pitfalls that are encountered during a parent-teacher conference. I did not compare any students with another and blaming parents. Therefore, I managed to

avoid any major problems in the conference. The most challenging pitfall that I encountered was a cultural divide. Most of the children are from different cultures and this may bring about language barrier. Although I managed to find people that translated, this was the most difficult pitfall. Next time, I will be more prepared in terms of the cultural and language divide. Parent-teacher conferences are effective because its use has various benefits. One of them is that it has positive developmental effects on the children (Young & Behounek, 2006). The sharing of information from both parents and teachers enables both parties to understand how they can help the children to develop. It also helps to establish a good relationship between home and school. Also, it creates an individual relationship between the teacher and the parent. The face to face meetings ensure that the teachers clarify some things like the grades and can clear some misunderstandings that may exist. Also, it helps the parents and the teachers to exchange ideas on the development of child. The parents get to understand how the children learn and how they behave in their classroom. Student led parent-teacher conferences help the students to express them especially if they are using power point presentations during the conference. It helps them to improve their speaking and representation skills (Young & Behounek, 2006).

What Should Teachers Do to Provide an Ideal Orientation to The School/Program for Parents and Children?

There are various steps in which teachers can use to ensure that to provide a good orientation program. The first thing is assessing the needs of both the children and the parents. The success of the program starts with knowing the needs of the volunteers involved in the program. This is by coming up with places other than the classroom where parents can make the most contribution. The second thing to do is to plan for success. A teacher can ensure that the parents are involved in the program by coming up with workshops with the aim of maintaining a family involvement program that is successful. The next step is to identify the cultural differences between various children and parents. The children and parents that are in a program have different cultures. It is the responsibility of the teacher to create a bridge between the culture at home and the one at school. Teachers can use the parents to understand how the school can ensure that it complements with the beliefs at home. This is a better strategy that waiting for the parents and children to adapt to the culture of the school. The policies that the teachers use should promote respect and peace of the culture of children and their parents.

What Is Separation Anxiety? What Can Teachers Do to Help Parents and Children Adjust to Separation?

A separation anxiety is a disorder where a person is very fearful and anxious when he or she is separated from the people he or she is close to (Brichoux, 2004). This disorder mostly happens to children when they join school and leave their families at home. The symptoms may start from childhood and progress to adulthood. *There are various ways in which a teacher can help parents and children to adjust to separation.* The greatest responsibility that the teachers have is to help the children adapt to the school environment. One of the ways that the teacher can help the student is by providing a safe place that a child can relax before going to the classroom. The second way to help the child is to educate them about anxiety. The teacher should educate the child about the symptoms of anxiety so that he or she knows when he is experiencing it.

The teacher can also give activities that distract the child from anxiety, for example drawing a picture. Another strategy that the teacher should use is to encourage group discussion (Brichoux, 2004). The discussion could start with one person and the advance to many people. This strategy ensures that the child becomes comfortable in the class environment by interaction with others.

What Are Some Informal Communication Methods Teachers Can Use to Convey Information, Interest, And Support to Families?

1-Daily conversations- one of the informal ways of showing support and interest to the families is by holding informal conversations. This is the best method of discussing the daily events of a child at school. It is an important method where the parent can ask the progress of the child. At this point the teacher should inquire if the parent has any questions about the progress of the child.

2-Phone calls- Phone calls can either be formal or informal one. They are formal when a teacher is discussing informal things like the daily news of the child. It is informal when the teacher calls to remind parents of some event or when asking about specific information.

3-E-mails- Just like a phone call, an email can be either formal or informal. Similar to the phone call, an informal email is used to inform a parent when a minor accident or an injury happens. Additionally, it can be used to remind the parent of a particular even or to seek some information. These informal methods of communication are used to inform parents about general information or making them aware of some private things that concern their child in school.

Why Should Parent-Teacher Conferences Be Held on A Regular Basis? What Factors Lead to Productive Conferences? What Pitfalls Should Be Avoided?

Parent-teacher conferences should be held regularly so that it can enhance parent involvement in school more. Holding the conferences regularly helps to strengthen the relationship between parents and teachers and makes the parents more involved in what the children are doing in school. There are various factors that lead to successful conferences. One of them is planning before the conference. Both teachers and parents should plan before going to the conferences. Parents should look at their children's work and see their strengths and weaknesses. Secondly, the parent should see the assessment of the child's work and discuss with the teacher how the child can improve in the areas that he or she is weak. Lastly, goals should be set for the child. A parent should know what to do at home to help the children. Teachers should also find ways to assist the child to attain the set goals.

The Various Pitfalls That Should Be Avoided Include

1. Communicating only once- Parents and teachers should be in constant communication to build strong bonds for them to solve concerns.
2. One-way communication- Communication should come from both parties to help each other understand what the child needs to be successful.

3. Having protective characteristics- Parents should look at the teacher as a team member. Although they may be protective of their children, they should try to solve misunderstandings.

What Are Some Advantages and Potential Challenges of Working with Parents in The Classroom? What Can Teachers Do to Encourage Parental Visits to The Classroom?

- 1) One of the advantages of parents working in a classroom is that children achieve better outcomes. Studies have found that children whose parents are involved in their education perform better than the others who do not. Also, working with parents in classrooms enhances positive relationships. Parents have better relationships with their children as well as the teachers.
- 2) One of the challenges faced in involving parents in the classroom is lack of time. Many parents are busy and may lack time to attend classroom sessions. Secondly, there may be tension in the relationship between teachers and parents. This hinders them from working together. The other challenge is lack of vested interest from some families. Some parents believe that they are of no help visiting their children in their classrooms.
- 3) In order to encourage parents to visit the classrooms, the teachers should improve communication. Communication is one of the most important ways of building a good relationship. Constant communication with parents will encourage them to visit classrooms. Also, teachers should create an exciting and comfortable environment to the parents when they visit for the first time. This will make the parent comfortable and make them feel comfortable and more interested in the education of a child.

How Can Teachers Use Technology to Foster Communication with Families?

1-The technological methods of communication are more effective than the traditional methods of communication like posters and newsletters. With the improvement in technology in the current times, it is logical that teachers use various methods to enhance communication with families. One of the most common methods is the email. A teacher uses an email to communicate information may either be formal or informal. The teacher could use individual emails or group emails (Ray & Shelton, 2004). It can be used to communicate the progress of a child or any upcoming events that the parents need to learn about.

2-The second way the teacher uses technology is by coming up with a website that involves parents of the whole class. In the website, the teacher can post incoming events in school and the activities of the children. In the website, the teacher can create a forum for asking questions and discussion.

3-The other method is video conferencing. Occasional live videos showing class activities enable a parent to be more involved in the school life of his child. The parent becomes aware of how the children learn, how they behave and can contribute to any idea that may help to improve their behavior and learning in class.

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About the Author

I am Sarah AL-Sharif. From Saudi Arabia, Riyadh. Currently, I am doctoral student at Ball State University- Special Education Department. In 2015, I graduated from master's degree from Ball State University- Special Education Department. I obtained my bachelor's degree from King Saud University - Special Education Department in Saudi Arabia, Riyadh. I have started my dissertation in full 2017. I am working at King Saud University as lecture. After I graduate from the PHD, I will back to my work at King Saud University in Saudi Arabia, Riyadh. I changed my dissertation topic from "Using Dramatic Playing Center to Improve Social Skills in Children Who Diagnosed with Autism in Early Childhood Education". To "Teacher's Perceptions of The Impact of Peer-Mediated Instruction Intervention Through Social Playing to Improve Social Skills for Children with ASD In Preschool in General Education Classrooms". Actually, I have changed my dissertation topic because I found from my reading that, children with ASD have several social effects especially on the school setting. They have many problems that involve adults or their peers including recognizing non-verbal language, participation in group play, making eye contact, making lasting friendships and responding to conversations and non-verbal expressions. Peer-Mediated Instruction Intervention (PMII) is one of the most effective intervention that assist children with ASD to improve social skills. In this intervention, teacher train peer without disabilities to interact with children with ASD by encourage children with ASD to engage and participate with peer in different activities in classroom in general education classrooms. Additionally, PMII, have shown to improve the non-verbal skills, social interaction, friendships, and reciprocal social communication. All the reviews state that PMI is an effective way of improving the social skills of children with autism (Chang & Locke,2016). There are short-term benefits of PMII to children with ASD. It shows that interacting with peers during play helps to improve the social skills of children with ASD. There are various types of PMII They include Peer Tutor, Peer Buddy, Group-Oriented Contingency, Peer Networks, Integrated Peer Groups, Peer Initiation Training and Pivotal Response Training. Integrated Play groups are the type where an adult gives the peers and children with autism an environment that would help them interact with one another. Children with ASD enjoy playing like other children without disabilities, but children with ASD face challenges since they only play with few toys in a repetitive way. They may find it difficult to copy some actions, explore the surrounding, share their objects, take turns, and respond to others. Improving the social skills of the children with ASD is the most important aspect to teachers in the school setting. Teachers should observe those peers that children interact with (Chang & Locke,2016). To support peer engagement that yields interactions, teachers should look at the emotional support given to all the students in class. Teachers should show support to all children and avoid favoring others. It may be difficult to show emotional support to all children. Therefore, professional development and training with support from counsellors can help to improve this factor. Supporting children with autism does not mean only in their

behavior and social skills. The workload that the teacher gives to the students is also a way of helping them. The teacher should ensure that the work they give to children with autism either in school or at home is achievable. It should not be too much or too little. Children with autism often find some topics interesting and others not interesting (Chang & Locke, 2016). Therefore, due to this nature, teachers should sometimes give the children a choice on what they want to do. Many studies have been conducted to understand the perception that teachers have in using intervention as a method of helping children with autism improve their social skills. There are many types of interventions that have been used in classrooms to help improve the social skills of the children with autism (Katz, 2014). In conclusion, knowing teacher's perceptions about various interventions for children with ASD assist the school administration to provide to teachers who are working with children with ASD, professional development workshops, in the interventions that teachers believe that they are effective for children with ASD achievement and interaction with peer in general education classroom Katz, 2014).

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Examining Black Male Behavior through a Culturally Reflective Lens

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Abstract

Black males have been disproportionately identified, labeled with, and placed into classrooms for students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD). For decades, since the inception of the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), now the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), schools and school personnel have struggled with Black males' overrepresentation in the EBD category. Suggestions have been put forth regarding how to fix this ongoing problem, including encouraging teachers to adopt culturally responsive strategies that are specific to the needs of Black males. This article will discuss (1) the disproportionate representation of Black males with EBD in special education, (2) typical Black male behaviors that contribute to their disproportionate representation, (3) the functional behavior assessment (FBA) and its reconceptualization as a culturally responsive tool, (4) the implementation of culturally responsive strategies in the classroom, and (5) suggestions for teachers to incorporate to create a safe and engaging environment.

Keywords: emotional behavioral disorders, overrepresentation, functional behavior assessment, cultural responsiveness

Black Males with EBD: Examining Behaviors through a Culturally Reflective Lens

For over forty years, since the inception of Education of All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) now the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Black males have been disproportionately represented in special education (Blanchett, 2006). Specifically, research has shown that Black males are labeled more frequently in certain special education categories [e.g., emotional behavioral disorders (EBD), learning disabilities (LD), and intellectual disabilities (ID) (Blanchett, 2006; Kauffman & Landrum, 2012).

Alarming, 8.4% of Black students are identified with EBD and receive special education services (Office of Special Education Services, 2015). In fact, data from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP, 2015) has indicated that Black males between the ages of 6 and 21 are two times more likely to be served under the category of EBD than other cultural groups. Additionally, Black males have a high referral rate of suspensions (Lo & Cartledge, 2006), push out rates (Zion & Blanchett, 2011), low academic outcomes (Blanchett, 2006), and school to prison pipeline (Tobin & Vincent, 2011).

Black students represent 15.5% of the population and are suspended at a rate of 18% in K-12 compared to their White peers (Civil Rights Data Collection, 2016). Additionally, Black children represent 19% of the preschool population and are suspended at a rate of 47% compared to their White peers (CRDC, 2016). The numbers are even more alarming when separated by gender.

Males

Black males represent 8% of all students and are expelled at 19% compared to White students (CDRC, 2016). They are two times more likely to receive a referral to the juvenile system compared to White students (CDRC, 2016). The subjective definitions of these disability categories in the Individuals Disabilities Education Act 2004 (IDEA) are partly to blame for these labeling disparities. The rate of suspension for Black males at the preschool level indicates the disparities that exist and how the school-to-prison pipeline is initiated at early stages in their schooling for these students.

Alongside discussions regarding disproportionate representation of Black males and EBD, McKenna (2013) and Blanchett (2006) discovered that Black males who are labeled with EBD end up in self-contained classrooms, segregated from their typical peers (Kauffman & Landrum, 2012), expelled (Tobin & Vincent, 2011), or incarcerated (Skiba, Simmons, Ritter, Gibb, Rausch, Cuadrado, & Chung, 2008) at more frequent rates than their White peers. These students are usually not served in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Instead, they are isolated from an appropriate education and their typical peers (Serpell, Hayling, Stevenson, & Kern, 2009) when they are placed in those more restrictive placements (i.e., self-contained classroom, special schools, and prisons).

Elementary and secondary teachers are 82% White and predominately female (Garigulo, 2016, NCES, 2012). Conversely, most students are from diverse backgrounds (Garigulo, 2016). The percentages of teachers being predominantly White may impact the disproportionate representation of Black males in special education, their suspension from school, their poor outcomes in school, them being pushed out of school, and their inclusion in the school to prison pipeline. This article discusses the disproportionate representation of Black males with EBD in special education, potential Black male behaviors that contribute to misperceptions of them that contributes to their over representation in the EBD category, the functional behavior assessment and its reconceptualization as a culturally-responsive tool, the implementation of culturally responsive strategies in the classroom, and suggestions for teachers to incorporate in order to create a safe and engaging environment for all students.

White Teachers Perceptions of Black Male Behaviors

There are multiple, intertwined reasons for the frictions and multiple perspectives existing between Black male students and their teachers, specifically White teachers. Argued here are the divergent behavioral patterns in everyday social encounters in the typical U.S. school. Because Black male behavioral patterns are so divergent from the school and teacher “norm”, the misidentification and over representation of Black males in the EBD category are outcomes of the systematic differences between White teachers and Black male students during behavioral encounters (Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003; Townsend, 2000).

Culturally, Black males are quite different than their peers from other races/ethnicities. Likewise, their behaviors in the classroom/school are manifested in vastly different ways. Additionally, there are different cultural codes (i.e., communication styles) and rules (e.g., talking out of turn and being loud) for behavior in the Black community (Sherwin & Schmidt, 2003). For this reason, Black males’ behaviors are often misperceived by their White teachers and other school personnel, oftentimes leading to their overrepresentation in the EBD

category. For example, Black males may talk out (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008) during class and this is sometimes misperceived as a problem behavior when it may be cultural.

The literature has consistently reported that Black males are punished more severely for the same behaviors and lesser infractions than their White peers (Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997; Skiba, Eckes, & Brown, 2010; Vincent & Tobin, 2010). For example, Black males are typically suspended for classroom disruptions, talking out, non-compliance, being off-task (Lo & Cartledge, 2006), disrespect, fighting, and defiance (Skiba, Horner, Chung, Rausch, May, & Tobin, 2011). Teachers may interpret these behaviors as being inappropriate (Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, and Curran, 2003; Weinstein, Curran, and Tomlinson-Clarke, 2004) in the school setting, but do they constitute a behavioral problem? Consequently, behaviors may be interpreted incorrectly due to cultural differences between the teacher's and student's cultural backgrounds (Sherwin & Schmidt, 2003). This lack of cultural awareness from the teacher may contribute to the disproportionality of Black males being disciplined (i.e., dean's referral, suspension, expulsion, etc.) at higher rates than any other ethnic group.

It is true that Black male behaviors are manifested differently due to their cultural upbringing (Coard, Wallace, Stevenson, & Brotman, 2004). However, it should not be inferred that this is a justification for their misidentification as a behavioral problem. Rather, teachers and other school personnel should seek to understand the other factors (e.g., White privilege, cultural biases of teachers, institutional policies and practices, lack of culturally responsive strategies, and assessment biases) posited in the literature regarding the overrepresentation of Black males in the category of EBD.

Factors Contributing to the Overrepresentation of Black Students

The literature has identified several factors that contribute to the overrepresentation of Black males. The five factors most often identified in the literature that contribute to disproportionality in school suspension include: (1) White privilege, (2) cultural biases of teachers, (3) institutional policies and practices, (4) lack of culturally responsive strategies, and (5) assessment biases. Each factor is discussed in detail in the following sections.

White Influence

Zion and Blanchett (2011) suggested that the education system was not created to include issues of race, socioeconomic status (SES), and privilege. The education system focuses on White privilege and fails to look at a more inclusive model (Blanchett, 2006; Zion & Blanchett, 2011). Moreover, the teaching workforce is 82% White and predominantly female (Garigulo, 2014; NCES, 2016). Therefore, White privilege plays a major role in the development of policy, educational environment, and the expectations teachers have for students (Monroe, 2005).

Additionally, Black students are the most marginalized in the educational system (Shealey, Lue, Brooks, & McCray, 2005). For example, Black males have the highest rates of suspension, expulsion, push out, and inclusion in the school to prison pipeline. Data has suggested that these occurrences are due to systemic racism that exists within schools because it continues to fail Black students (Blanchett, 2006; Ferri & Connor, 2005; Shealey, Lue, Brooks, & McCray, 2005).

Frequently, White privilege may affect the achievement of students because of the teacher's lack of awareness of different cultures (Davis, Mirick, & McQueen, 2015). Some teachers may have preconceived beliefs regarding which behaviors are acceptable based on their White privilege (Monroe, 2005). It is possible that this White privilege does not allow teachers to understand the cultural behaviors of Black male students. Because of this misunderstanding, teachers' implicit biases become the lens through which they perceive these students' behaviors. It has been posited that teachers could mitigate some of those biases by becoming more culturally competent (Bal, Sullivan, & Harper, 2013).

Cultural Biases of Teachers

One factor identified in the literature regarding the disproportionality of Black males with EBD is teacher bias. Teachers may engage in implicit (unconscious) biases (e.g., perceptions Black students are more aggressive, low achieving, lazy, defiant, and disruptive) when referring students with EBD (Blanchett, 2006; Neal, McCray Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003; Swanson, Cunningham, & Spencer, 2003). Cultural biases also contribute to disproportionality by affecting the referral rate of Black males. Oftentimes, the teacher may have a misconception of students' behaviors. This could indicate a lack of cultural competence that may be inhibiting the teacher from accurately identifying students with EBD (Harry & Anderson, 1994). Thus, it is imperative that teachers understand that cultural differences exist between their Black male students and themselves. Before teachers can understand their Black students' challenges regarding behavioral communication styles in U.S. schools, they must first acknowledge that their position of privilege (discussed earlier) may be preventing them from recognizing the differences between cultural communicative styles and EBD (Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott, & Garrison-Wade, 2008).

White privilege, as well as teacher biases, has contributed to the adoption of practices and policies in school that set certain groups of students (e.g., students with disabilities, students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds) up for failure. Many of these practices and policies have been identified to be discriminatory towards Black males and has also exacerbated the over representation data for Black males in the school system. One such policy, zero tolerance, is discussed further in the next section.

Institutional Policies and Practices

Initially, zero tolerance policies were designed to "maintain order" in schools and were implemented to prevent students who committed minor infraction from committing more serious offenses. However, researchers (Skiba & Peterson, 1999) have reported that zero tolerance policies, which established mandatory minimum punishments for designated offenses, have a history of discriminating against Black males. The zero tolerance policies spread quickly across K–12 institutions and expanded to include a variety of undesired behaviors, and they initiated the transformation of urban US schools into places that resembled prisons.

This transformation of urban schools, predominantly attended by Black students, created injustices for many Black students. Zero tolerance and other policies were grounded in whiteness, because not only were the teachers White, but the ones making the policies were also White (Monroe, 2005). The implications of zero tolerance policies on Black students, and males in particular, have been so drastic in the US educational system that many civil rights organizations (see American Civil Liberties Union) have studied the impact of the policy

and determined it to have a serious impact on the disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates of Black males (American Civil Liberties Union, n.d.)

Despite the original intent of zero tolerance policies, school districts and personnel have to consider the negative effects these policies and practices have had on Black males. These policies and practices must be replaced with evidence-based strategies designed to address real behavior challenges rather than punish students for their cultural differences. Culturally responsive strategies should be considered when addressing the academic and behavioral needs of Black male students.

Lack of Culturally-Responsive Strategies

Unfortunately, the lack of culturally responsive strategies in the classroom continues to affect the disproportionality of Black students (Fiedler, Chiang, Van Haren, Jorgensen, Halberg, & Boreson, 2008). In order to address the disproportionate representation of Black males, teachers should implement culturally responsive practices (Rice, 2006), as well as evidence-based strategies to address both academic and behavioral concerns (McKenna, 2013). Culturally responsive instruction may help Black males succeed in the classroom environment. Likewise, Griner and Stewart (2012) found that teachers who are more attuned to the cultural diversity of their students have more positive outcomes in the classroom. Furthermore, culturally responsive teaching involves recognizing the different cultural dynamics of different groups of people and involves the differences between home and school environment (Gay, 2002).

However, some teachers do not employ these strategies in their classroom and that creates disadvantages for Black students. The lack of culturally responsive strategies in the classroom is a disservice to culturally and linguistically diverse students because the curriculum is not relevant (McKenna, 2013). Teachers should adapt the learning environment to meet the needs of the students instead of having perceptions of what behaviors are acceptable. The lack of cultural competence of educators may affect the assessment processes. Culture and race also impact the assessment processes (Cullinan & Kauffman, 2005; Serpell et al., 2009). The assessment process can have a lot of biases due to the cultural differences of the teacher and student.

Assessment Biases

Assessment bias and teacher perceptions contribute to the overrepresentation problem. Serpell et al. (2009) discovered that behaviors that constitute a child has EBD are not clearly identified. For example, disrespect, defiance, and disruption have been identified as the three reasons a Black male student is removed from school (Day-Vines & Day-Hairston, 2005). These infractions are subjective at best and culturally loaded at worst. The interpretation of each could be left to the teacher/school to determine whether the student has violated either and what the subsequent punishment will be (i.e., suspension, identification as having EBD, etc.). Several assessments are required when determining whether the child meets the requirements for EBD (i.e., behavior rating scales, IQ test, FBA, and observations) (Kauffman & Landrum, 2012). Furthermore, another teacher who is not familiar with the student is required to complete an observation and behavior rating scale (Kauffman & Landrum, 2012). Another concern is that the assessments used in schools may not be normed in a way to account for the cultural codes and rules of behavior (i.e., to identify what disrespect, defiance, and disruption mean in the Black community) of Black males. This speaks to not only the assessment bias, but also the

subjective nature of the infraction that most often get Black male students excluded from school. Finally, the lack of educators' cultural competence could affect the assessment process (Mckenna, 2013). Due to teacher-student culture clash, teachers may misinterpret the students' behaviors. Those misinterpretations and lack of knowledge regarding the "codes and rules of behavior" of the Black male could be problematic during the assessment process.

Functional Behavior Assessment

The purpose of the functional behavioral assessment (FBA) is to determine the function of the behavior and it is important that teachers implement a comprehensive FBA with fidelity (Alberto & Troutman, 2006; Algozzine, Daunic, & Smith, 2010; Scheuermann & Hall, 2016). Data collection procedures, using both direct and indirect assessments, should be used when conducting an FBA with fidelity (Alberto & Troutman, 2006; Algozzine, Daunic, & Smith, 2010; Scheuermann & Hall, 2016). Direct assessments and Indirect assessment are required during the FBA (Alberto & Troutman, 2006; Algozzine, Daunic, & Smith, 2010; Scheuermann & Hall, 2016). The direct assessments gather data on the behavior the student is exhibiting and the indirect assessment provides information from interviews with previous teacher, parent, and student. The data collected through the interviews are valuable when implementing a behavior intervention plan (BIP) (Alberto & Troutman, 2006; Algozzine, Daunic, & Smith, 2010; Scheuermann & Hall, 2016).

Teachers often inadvertently negatively reinforce the behaviors of students with EBD (Kauffman & Landrum, 2012). This causes the problem behaviors to persist. Students with EBD need an environment that fosters structure and classroom management (Kauffman & Landrum, 2012). The lack of structure and behavior management may increase the behaviors students with EBD display. Conversely, the FBA is important in order to identify the function of behavior to implement a behavior intervention plan (BIP). Part of the intervention plan may include a reconceptualization of the standard FBA to include more culturally responsive analysis of the functions of the behaviors.

Culturally Responsive FBA

The culturally responsive FBA will allow teachers to address the possible function of behavior for Black students. However, teachers should analyze the FBA through a culturally responsive lens of the student's culture. By looking at the student's cultural background, teachers are able to interpret whether the problem behavior they identified in the FBA is due to the child's culture or is indeed a problem behavior that requires intervention.

Teachers can administer a pre-screener (See Table 1) with all students at the beginning of the school year to become aware of potential student responses to different situations that may arise in the classroom. The pre-screener will allow the teacher and student to build a relationship at the beginning of the school year, as well as assist the teacher in becoming more aware of the student's culture or cultural differences. The pre-screener will give the teachers knowledge regarding how the student interacts with their natural environment and how their culture influences them in the school setting. Teachers may gain knowledge about different cultures and how different students from different backgrounds may behave differently if they incorporate the pre-screener with

their students. It may also assist them with becoming more culturally responsive when implementing a FBA because they will have background information on the student's culture.

Traditional FBAs have not been effective in addressing challenging behaviors exhibited by Black males. Oftentimes, teachers do not take into account the cultural considerations when addressing challenging behaviors. Moreno, Wong, Short, and Bullock (2013) have discussed the importance of implementing culturally responsive practices to address challenging behaviors of Black males with EBD.

It is recommended that teachers utilize the FBA process initially when a potential problem behavior begins because it can lead to the identification of cultural differences between the student's culture and the teacher's perceptions of one's behavior (Moreno, Wong-lo, & Bullock, 2014). Special education and general education teachers can implement the culturally relevant FBA (See Table 2) for all students in their classrooms.

Furthermore, the FBA assists teachers with gathering essential data that will influence the strategies they use to intervene with the problem behavior. Teachers can then address and decrease the problem behavior by implementing culturally responsive strategies to decrease the behavior (Moreno et al., 2013).

Schools need to ensure FBAs are being implemented with fidelity in order to effectively address the concerns of the student. However, research has shown that schools will focus on disciplinary actions instead of applying evidence-based practices to address the behavioral concerns of students with EBD (Moreno et al., 2013).

Outcomes of Not Implementing Culturally Relevant FBA

Black males with EBD continue to have the poorest outcomes compared to all other ethnic groups (Blanchett, 2006; Kauffman & Landrum, 2012). The poor outcomes of Black males may continue to persist without the implementation of a culturally relevant FBA. Teachers will continue to refer Black males at higher rates for suspensions instead of addressing the behaviors in the classroom. This will continue because of the policies (i.e., zero tolerance) that are employed in our educational system (Skiba, 2002; Skiba, 2014). The increased rate in suspension will lead to expulsion and inclusion in the school-to-prison pipeline and both will have a detrimental effect on the outcomes of Black students in school (Skiba, Horner, Chung, Rausch, May, & Tobin, 2011).

Outcomes

Black males with EBD have the lowest social, academic, and behavioral outcomes (Blanchett, 2006; Tobin & Vincent, 2011). Oftentimes, they may feel alienated from school because of the lack of culturally responsive curriculum and environment. However, Black students are the most marginalized in the education system and are often referred for special education, suspension, and expulsion because of teacher biases (Mckenna, 2013; Skiba et al., 2011; Vincent & Tobin, 2010; Tobin & Vincent, 2011). These referrals that are not warranted impact the outcomes of these students because they are more than likely placed in segregated environments and secluded from their typical peers (Blanchett, 2006; Vincent & Tobin, 2010). The more days that Black students with EBD are suspended and expelled, the more coursework they will have missed. These missed days and academic instruction directly impacts their academic achievement. This continues the widening of the achievement gap that currently exists for Black students in our education system (Gastic, 2017). Additionally,

the push out rates of Black students increases with the higher rates of school suspension (Skiba, 2014). A culturally relevant FBA recommends that teachers analyze the behaviors following the process of a traditional FBA, but also analyzing the behaviors through a culturally reflective lens. When the FBA is not implemented using a culturally responsive framework, Black male students will continue to pay the ultimate academic and behavioral price in schools, eventually leading to them being pushed out of school.

Pushout rates. Black students are being pushed out of the educational system because of the high rates of suspension (Fowler, 2011; Skiba, 2014). The absence of cultural responsiveness and support in schools and from school personnel plus the punishment Black students receive has caused them to be pushed out of the educational system altogether (Townsend-Walker, 2012). Additionally, school officials have biases and a deficit mindset because they believe students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds are more aggressive or violent. However, these are perceptions they may have due to their failure to view Black students through a culturally reflective lens. These views/perceptions create an environment that is not nurturing and they alienate students from CLD backgrounds. When students are disconnected from the curriculum and do not have the teacher-student relationships because of cultural a clash that may exist, they become disengaged and alienated from school and that makes them more susceptible to being pushed out.

If students are leaving the educational system before they have attained an adequate level of education consistent with their peers, then they are destined to enter the prison pipeline because they have no academic or behavioral training to fall back on.

School-to-prison-pipeline. Black students with EBD are being pushed into the school-to-prison pipeline. This is due to the disparities that exist within the schools. Blacks are being pushed into the juvenile system because of the number of suspensions they receive when compared to other ethnic groups. The percentage of Black students in the school-to-prison pipeline is inevitable with the current policies that protect whiteness and fail to include students from CLD backgrounds. The current policies that exist within schools that relate to suspension lead these students to the juvenile system (Porter, 2015). Black students are referred at a rate of 70% to the juvenile system for disciplinary reasons (Amurao, 2013). The referral rates to the juvenile system also contributes to them being pushed out of school. They are more likely not to graduate when compared to their White peers (Amurao, 2013; Townsend-Walker, 2012).

Conclusion

The disproportionality of Black males in special education has been a major issue for decades (Skiba et al., 2008). The disproportionality of Black males impacts their educational outcomes and is detrimental throughout their life span (Mckenna, 2013). They are excluded from the general education environment, leading them to feel alienated from school and therefore impacting their academic achievement (Blanchett, 2006). The education system needs to employ a more culturally responsive model. Moreover, there is a need to diversify the teaching environment to create policies that are more responsive to students from diverse backgrounds.

Teachers should incorporate culturally responsive strategies in their classrooms in order for all students to succeed. Schools should host professional development trainings that address culturally responsive strategies and how to identify the behaviors that are related to a student's culture. Culturally responsive teaching involves recognizing the different cultural dynamics of different groups of people, involves, the differences between home environments and school environments (Gay, 2002). Teachers will employ culturally responsive strategies when they learn more about their student's cultures. The pre-screener will give teachers additional knowledge about their student's cultural norms, which will assist them with being more culturally responsive if and when a potential behavioral problem arises. Teachers should have the opportunity to learn about the diverse backgrounds of students they teach in order to incorporate a culturally relevant lens when they are conducting an FBA. The pre-screener will give the teachers the tools that will assist them with successfully implementing a culturally relevant FBA. Furthermore, teachers also need to partner with the student's parents and community to learn more about the different cultures to meet the diverse student population (Gay, 2002).

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Table 1. *Pre-screener of Cultural Characteristics and Behaviors*

Student pre-screener	Teacher-student pre-screener
What skills do you have that make you a successful student?	What skills do you think students should have to be successful in a classroom setting?
Are there any cultural practices you engage in that may not be supported in the school environment?	Are there any cultural practices you are not aware of that you would like resources for to better support you and your students?
How do you ask for help?	How do you want students to ask for help?
What are some signs or behaviors you display when you are frustrated?	What are some behaviors or indicators that students possess when they are frustrated?
How do you successfully transition between activities in class?	What are your expectations for students when transitioning between activities?
How do you interact with your peers in class?	How do you want your students to interact with other children?
How do you express your feelings?	What are your expectations for students when expressing his/her feelings?
What behavior policies do you feel are fair?	What are your behavior policies?
What is your preferred design for your classroom?	How do you design your classroom environment?

Table 2. Re-Conceptualizing the FBA Through a Cultural Lens

Black Male Behaviors	Current FBA	FBA Through a Cultural Lens	Suggestions
Talking out loud	Attention/Escape	Teach appropriate ways on engaging in discussion and provide positive reinforcement	Include culturally relevant materials (e.g., materials that reflect CLD students, books, posters, and lessons) to increase engagement (Gay, 2000).
Out of Seat	Attention/Escape/Sensory	Discuss breaks during activities and provide reinforcement	Differential seating and movement activities (Tomlinson, 2000).
Defiance	Attention/Escape/Access to Tangible	Discuss expectations, evaluate if the assignment is too difficult, and provide accommodations	Provide reinforcement for completing assignment (Algozzine, Daunic, & Smith, 2010; Scheuermann & Hall, 2016).
Off-task	Attention/Escape	Provide activities that are culturally relevant to increase engagement, create cooperative learning groups, and modify lesson to meet the needs of CLD students	Provide assistance/peer assistance (Spencer, Mason, Simpson, Oatis, 2009).

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