

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT FOR STUDENTS  
WITH EDUCATIONAL DISABILITIES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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2018

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TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT FOR STUDENTS  
WITH EDUCATIONAL DISABILITIES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT FOR STUDENTS  
WITH EDUCATIONAL DISABILITIES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Graduate Education Department  
Southwest Baptist University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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By

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May 10, 2018

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to those individuals that have made my goal achievable. I want to thank my mother, Leslie, my father, Robert, and my stepmother, Peggy, for providing me with amazing examples of educational leadership. Your experiences and knowledge have shaped my ability to pursue and accomplish my educational goals. The constant love and support from my husband, Stacey, and my children, Charlotte and Beau, have allowed me to remain focused and keep pushing even when the end seemed light years away. As a family, we sacrificed plenty as I sought to achieve my goal and I will forever be grateful for your unconditional love and encouragement. It took a village to make this happen and I am blessed to be surrounded by my extended family who spent countless hours caring for my children and ensuring Charlotte and Beau were happy and healthy while I traveled to Bolivar for class or spent hours locked in a library writing over the past few years. To Mom, Dad, Peggy, Sarah, Rachel, Emily, Patrice, and Kelsey, thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Dr. Joseph Sartorius has been on this journey with me from the beginning and has been a constant source of encouragement and reassurance. I appreciate your willingness to advocate for my work through every peak and valley. Many thanks to Dr. James Truelove for your guidance and patience. Dr. Kevin Schriver, thank you for insights as a newcomer to my committee. You provided an enormous sense of clarity throughout this process that assisted me in tying everything together. I want my children to know that being a mom with full-time career and educational pursuits does not come without sacrifice. I am thankful that God chose you for me and I look forward to all of our new adventures together as our new chapter begins.

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## ABSTRACT

Parental involvement has long been researched and discussed as a positive influence on the educational and social outcomes for students across grade levels. Within our school communities, students who are identified with educational disabilities face increased challenges to decrease the learning gap compared to students without educational disabilities. This research sought to learn how teachers perceived the influence of parental involvement with regard to the academic success and IEP goal progress for students with educational disabilities. To measure teacher perceptions, a survey was designed and disseminated to teachers certified in regular and special education at the elementary level within Region 8 of St. Louis, Missouri. The survey questions were designed to determine how teachers perceived parental involvement to impact the process when students were initially referred for a special education evaluation, how teachers perceived parental involvement once IEP goals had been established and progress was monitored, as well as and how parental involvement may impact assessment outcomes in the classroom. The survey revealed teachers that were certified in the area of special education consistently perceived parental involvement to have a greater impact on the initial special education referral process and progress specific to the IEPs for students with educational disabilities compared to teachers certified in regular education. Implications for educational practice and fostering additional parent involvement is discussed and future research in this area is delineated.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The United States has demonstrated commitments to high-quality education for students in public schools through various initiatives purported to intensify instruction in an effort to increase student proficiency and teacher accountability. Educators in the United States have spent the last two decades developing, implementing, and redeveloping educational programs for our children. As the researcher will later detail, the two most notable educational initiatives, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), focused on elevating the standards for learning while holding school districts accountable for narrowing the achievement gap among diverse subgroups. While these two initiatives had shared ideals, the approaches to meet the designed goals varied. While both mandated formal assessments from grades kindergarten through 12th, the Every Student Succeeds Act incorporated the Common Core State Standards to support academic growth while providing more avenues to address assessment fatigue (Korte, 2015). However, the action steps for each initiative may have fallen short of aligning with the intended goal, not because the goal was poorly designed but because the creators failed to address the underlying contributor to academic achievement gap -- poverty affecting our most vulnerable youth (The Conversation, 2015).

Early childhood education can be essential to paving the right path for future success in learning. Harvard University researchers (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2009) conducted a study that evaluated the brain development and subsequent impact of environmental factors for the youngest learners. Their findings

should serve to heighten the awareness and action of school communities to demand more access to greater resources that start in the home and from birth. As the researchers detailed, the brain of a 2 year-old has steadily created over 700 neural connections per second and by the age 3 the cumulative vocabulary has begun to fluctuate among same-aged peers as a result of parent interaction. Dependent upon a variety of risk factors, the achievement gap is already noticeable at the earliest moments of development and can continue into adulthood (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2009). Educators must remain cognizant of the risk factors and barriers that impede the appropriate intellectual and social development of our children in order to best meet their individual needs throughout their educational tenure. This action is not only important for neurotypical learners, but also invaluable for our learners that fall outside of typical expectations.

Parental involvement in a child's education creates an atmosphere that cultivates positive academic and behavioral growth. Students come from diverse backgrounds, compounding the varied individualized ideals of how involvement should be and is reflected in the educational setting; thus, this creates an abstract view of how parental involvement looks. Educators can value the role of parental involvement across academic environments regardless of the ability of parents to meet those expectations or the educational prowess of an individual's capacity to learn. It can be valuable to explore the benefits and barriers of parental involvement for our students with educational disabilities in an effort to determine the impact on progress within the scope of the each student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The researcher sought to identify how teachers, certificated in either general education or special education, perceived the value and

impact of parental involvement for students with educational disabilities and the subsequent impact on academic success in the general education curriculum, in addition to progress noted on the IEP.

### **Theoretical Framework**

A notable theorist behind the impact of parental involvement and the correlation to academic and social development is Joyce Epstein. Epstein's (1995) work defined specific types of parental involvement that are pertinent to student achievement and was founded on the notion that parent involvement analyzes the commitment between schools, families, and the community. The research conducted by Epstein concluded that parent involvement that intertwines practices in the home, at school, and within the community "shape the children's learning and development" (as cited by Smith, Wohlstetter, Kuzin, & De Pedro, 2011, p. 89). Epstein (1995) identified six types of involvement that will enhance the relationship between the school community and families to better support the academic and social success of students. Epstein utilized these six types of involvement within her organization, the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS), as an assessment tool to build relationships between school districts and families in diverse communities.

Epstein (2007) identified the first type of involvement as *parenting*. Parenting assists families with the development of parenting skills, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions that support learning. Practices that focus on parenting include workshops, parent education, programs to assist with nutrition/health, or home visits. One case study that focused on the parenting perspective summarized how a charter school was assisting families in need with housing and food

needs, worked with parents with limited English skills to find employment, offered GED classes, and offered parenting classes for parents after school (as cited by Smith et al., 2011). Challenges that occur with providing this level of support include reaching all families within the school community, allowing families an opportunity to educate their school about their culture, and providing assurance that all information disseminated is clear and useable.

The second type of involvement is known as *communicating* and focuses on communicating with families about school programs and student progress while encouraging consistent two-way communication between school and home. This practice encourages conferences with every parent one time per year, clear information on all school policies, language translators, and student work sent home, as well as regular newsletters. Challenges include consistently providing parent communications in a multitude of languages and reviewing the communications to ensure up-to-date information (Epstein, 2007).

The third type of involvement is known as *volunteering* and provides parents and families opportunities for volunteering during the school day as well as during school functions. Educators should be given the time to recruit, train, and support parent volunteers. Volunteering efforts can occur when schools take ownership in designing programs that reach all community members and accurately address community needs while encouraging volunteering programs to organize within the school walls (Epstein, 2007).

The fourth type of involvement is known as *learning at home* and speaks to how educators need to support families to create effective homework practices, goal setting,

and other curriculum-related activities. Examples of successful practices include providing families with academic expectations for all subjects at all levels, calendars with daily activities that promote learning, family fun nights for academic activities, and collaboration with parents when designing student goals. Challenges for involving parents through learning at home surrounds the coordination that it takes to build partnerships, and supporting families that do not speak English or have cognitive weaknesses that impede their ability to assist learning in the home, as well as the challenges related to poverty (Epstein 2007).

The fifth type of involvement is known as *decision making*, which includes families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy activities through parent teacher organizations or committees. Implementing parent teacher organizations, district-level committees for community involvement, and the development of networks to support collaboration are several examples of how to implement this type of involvement. Ensuring that families from all diverse backgrounds are represented and that students are included are a few of the challenges that arise as schools attempt to foster this type of involvement (Epstein, 2007).

The final type of involvement that Epstein (2007) shared is *collaborating with community*, which encourages partnership to “identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development” (p. 6). In order for this involvement to be successful and purposeful, practices should include extending service projects by students, families, and teachers into the community or providing information for students and families on community health, cultural, or social support programs. Solidifying funding and

organization as well as “assuring equity” of opportunities for students and families to participate are several of the challenges that schools may face when attempting to implement this level of involvement.

Epstein’s (2007) framework for parental involvement research and programming extends across the country and reaches a wide array of rural and urban populations yet does not offer deep insights for those students with educational disabilities. Research is necessary to further understand how students with education disabilities factor into the current research that provides insights as to the role parental involvement plays in the process and progress within the school environment. Additionally, research is also necessary to determine the factors that contribute to or impede the progress of students with educational disabilities. Parents of children with special needs require additional supports to be effective in parent involvement as outlined by Epstein’s model (Hodges, 2013).

### **Problem Statement**

The evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence on their children’s achievement in school and through life. When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more. (Henderson & Mapp, 2002, p. 7)

Students with educational disabilities can be a subgroup that is often overlooked as a population capable of consistently contributing to the academic proficiency of school districts. While the federal and state laws mandate parental involvement during the special education process, current practices may need to expand that involvement to the

general education classroom as a means for supporting student progress on general education curriculum tasks as well as IEP goals in efforts to grow achievement.

Educators may or may not understand how parental involvement for students with educational disabilities could best contribute to their academic growth. Regular and special education teachers may not grasp how parental involvement is reflected in student achievement in the general education classroom as well as for progress throughout the implementation of the IEP for students with educational disabilities.

### **Purpose for the Study**

Eliminating barriers and heightening the awareness of the benefits of parental involvement for students with educational disabilities in pursuit of narrowing the achievement gap for diverse subgroups drove the research for this study. If educators could increase the involvement of parents for students with educational disabilities then it becomes relevant that student performance on general education curriculum tasks, in addition, to performance on IEP goals would improve. Additionally, the research gained from this quantitative study could not only make positive connections between parental involvement and academic achievement for students with educational disabilities but also highlight the parental involvement practices that tend to draw more effective outcomes and specifically how those practices directly impact progress on IEP goals.

The researcher sought to measure the perceptions of certificated regular education and special education teachers who d elementary students with educational disabilities in schools outlined in Region 8 in the state of Missouri via surveys. The goal of this research was multifaceted with the intention of ascertaining certificated teachers' perceptions of parental involvement and the influence on student achievement for

students with educational disabilities, in addition to learning to what degree does parental involvement positively impact goal progress on IEPs.

### **Research Question**

1. How do teachers perceive the impact of parental involvement on the academic achievement and progress toward Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals, for students with educational disabilities?

In addition to the research question, there were several subset questions.

2. How do teachers perceive parental involvement and its impact during the initial special education process?
3. How do teachers perceive the impact of parental involvement on the progress a student makes specific to his/her IEP goals?
4. How do teachers perceive parental involvement specific to assessment outcomes for students with educational disabilities?
5. What are the differences in perceptions based on the type of certification held by the teacher?

### **Limitations/Delimitations/Assumptions**

The researcher sought to minimize the limitations and delimitations of this study.

The limitations of these study are outlined below.

1. The self-reporting of respondents' truthfulness and bias to experiences, perceptions, and personal lives.
2. Obtaining a large enough sample size to make generalizations to outside populations as well as the geographic areas of individuals surveyed.

3. Obtaining a large enough response rate from participants would impact the researchers ability to make conclusions and recommendations.

The delimitations of this study are outlined below.

1. The varying degrees to which parental involvement is stressed or incorporated across school districts, thus impacting perceptions.
2. The level of awareness that general education and special education teachers have about various parental involvement programs within their schools.
3. General education teachers may not have been readily aware of students they instructed that had IEPs.
4. General education teachers may not have been aware of practices to support parental involvement for their students with educational disabilities, thus impacting their perspectives.
5. General education teachers may have been unfamiliar or less confident in how to scaffold instruction to meet the needs of students with educational disabilities as outlined on their IEP. This could have negatively impacted a teacher's abilities to collaborate with parents to assist the student in completing general education tasks.
6. The varied enrollment statistics for students with IEPs across school districts in Missouri, and the variance in enrollment may adversely impact the parental involvement systems that were practiced.

## **Design Controls**

The researcher conducted a quantitative study that included the dissemination of electronic surveys to teachers certificated in the areas of regular and special education at the elementary school level. The surveys were separated into three distinct areas that aligned with the research questions. The first group of survey questions sought to identify how teachers perceived parental involvement during the initial referral special education process; the second group of questions aligned to identifying the impact of involvement on the progress students made specific to their IEP goals. The final group of survey questions looked to learn the perceptions of parental involvement and its impact on assessment outcomes for students with educational disabilities. Once the research was approved by a district, a detailed e-mail was distributed to the targeted participants outlining the researcher's request for participation and steps taken to ensure confidentiality of responses in an effort to increase the return rate. Weekly e-mails were disseminated across all districts that approved this research to reach the desired completion percentages. Once a desired number of surveys was completed, the researcher analyzed the responses to determine if teachers perceived parental involvement to impact academic achievement and progress on IEP goals for students with educational disabilities. Further analysis of data assisted the researcher in identifying trends related to participants' years of teaching experience, areas of certification, areas of current teaching assignment, and age.

## **Definition of Key Terms**

1. **Parental involvement:** the amount of participation a parent demonstrates assisting their child (ren) with academic growth (i.e., help with homework,

studying support, engagement) while also maintaining a consistent partnership with the school community (i.e., attending parent conferences, and communicating with teacher). Child Trends (2012).

2. **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):** IDEA is a federally mandated law that was established in 1975, previously known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, and reauthorized in 1997. Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, Pub. L. No. 94-142 (1975).
3. **Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):** for students who meet eligibility criteria in the educational diagnoses in the public school setting. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2016).
4. **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):** a mandate that requires educational decision-making teams must ensure that programming considerations for each student with an educational disability allows students to be taught with same-aged peers in the general education environment as often as it is appropriate. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2016).
5. **Individualized Education Program (IEP):** refers to the program that is designed and implemented to support the educational needs of students with educational diagnoses. The Individualized Education Program is a legal document that outlines a student's present level of performance and the impact of the educational disability on the regular classroom environment, specific educational goals, and specialized instruction and related services, as well as the amount of time and frequency that specialized services will be implemented by certificated teachers. The IEP also reflects the placement where the student will access services. The

team must adhere to the federal and state mandates that students are placed in the least restrictive environment, or LRE. The IEP team will also consider what modifications and accommodations are relevant and required for the students to achieve their individualized education goals. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2016).

## **Summary**

In Chapter One, the researcher introduced the background information that opened up the discussion pertaining to parental involvement for students with educational disabilities. The introduction to the study was offered in the theoretical framework, conjunction with the problem statement, research questions, design controls, and definition of terms, as well as possible limitations and delimitations to this completion of this study. The intent of this study was to identify the perceptions of certificated teachers in the areas of regular and special education at the elementary level as they related to the influence of parental involvement and the subsequent impact on student achievement in the general education curriculum and progress toward IEP goals. It was also the intent of the researcher to be able to analyze the data in an effort to make recommendations for program design and development across school communities. In Chapter Two, the researcher will delve into the literature that adequately informs the reader of the federal and state laws that developed to support persons, and eventually students, with disabilities. The literature will also dissect the state standards for learning, Missouri special education criteria, and the benefits and barriers to parental involvement. Current effective practices to increase parental involvement will also be discussed. Chapter Three will outline the process utilized to develop a survey that was disseminated to

general education and special education teachers to gain insights into the degree of parental involvement and the subsequent impacts. This chapter will also notate the process for selecting a population to survey as well as the methods used for analyzing the data. Chapter Four will present the results of this study. Chapter Five will summarize the study conducted, as well as offer the research community recommendations for future topics.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

Research indicates that parent involvement in schools directly correlates to the academic and social success of students (Monfredo, 2013; Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drzal, 2010; Wilder, 2013). Designing and supporting strong parent partnerships may vary from early childhood through high school; however, each opportunity should positively impact student achievement. Parents can be instrumental in promoting the awareness and implementation of school readiness skills during the toddler and preschool years in the effort to prepare their child for the goals of the academic environment (Practical Parent Partnership, 2012). The continuum of involvement for parents begins with opportunities to communicate with teachers and attend school activities when their child is in preschool or kindergarten (Nokali et al., 2010). Those opportunities begin to change as the focus on learning shifts from school readiness to academic progress. Hill and Tyson (2009) shared that adolescence is a big time for change specific to the “biological and cognitive growth, social development, and renegotiations of family relationships, especially the parent-adolescent relationship” (p. 1). These shifts in focus may redefine parent involvement as students move from primary grades through middle school and onto high school.

Parent engagement programs and practices are building across states, according to Reid (2015). This research revealed that school districts across the country have taken specific steps to maximize the parent engagement programs, thus positively impacting family and school partnerships. Reid highlighted that educators can no longer afford to

sit idly by and expect the volunteer parent programs to move family school partnerships forward in an effort to support academic achievement. School districts are starting to adopt successful models for family-school partnership departments, using paid professionals who “help families understand the language of schools and to help educators understand the culture of home” (Reid, 2015, p. 9). Parent involvement is revered in the best of circumstances; however, when parental involvement is analyzed for students with special needs many are left with many questions. Communication between home and school is essential to developing positive and effective relationships that foster progress for students with special needs. Parents of students with educational disabilities may require more support including specific and direct invitations to engage and participate to ensure communication between home and school is not a function of disconnect in their child’s learning (Thompson (2014); Fishman, & Nickerson, 2014).

The researcher explored whether parental involvement had an impact on the academic success of students, who are currently diagnosed with an educational disability in the regular education curriculum and furthermore, whether that involvement also impacted the progress of individualized goals as outlined on the student’s IEP. The researcher was interested in identifying, analyzing, and comparing any trends that may have existed among teachers that were certified in regular and/or special education. The researcher detailed the historical contributions to state and federal laws that were created to protect, educate, and include individuals with disabilities. Learning standards and state mandates for educational disability classification will also be discussed, along with the benefits and barriers of parental involvement, as well as models for parental involvement. The research will conclude with how school districts can develop, design, and implement

successful programs for parental involvement. The researcher anticipated learning from the perceptions of certificated regular education and special education teachers to understand how parental involvement impacts student achievement as well as progress toward IEP goals for students with educational disabilities.

### **Legal Road to Federal Protections**

When we think about the most influential laws that our country has enacted, we are left to imagine what the individuals and societies, as a whole, were engaged in or thinking about given the great lapse in time. For example, the Emancipation Proclamation and the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment, Women's Right to Vote, were issued 153 years and 96 years ago, respectively. These are just two of the hundreds of significant federal laws that have had tremendous impact on Americans. In contrast, the federal law that eventually gave individuals with disabilities the right to free and appropriate education was issued only 41 years ago. Our society has firsthand knowledge of the steps that individuals and communities took to get the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), also known as Public Law 94-142, passed in 1975, under the title of Education for All Handicapped Children Act, as well as the knowledge of the subsequent progress to date (Pete Wright, 2010).

The federal government's role in advocacy for individuals with disabilities began with the acknowledgement of the needs of military personnel in 1917 when federal monies were made available to states for vocational education programs, known as the Smith-Hughes Act. This act established the Federal Board for Vocational Education that created a variety of programs to support such individuals. In 1918, as soldiers were returning from World War I, the Soldier's Rehabilitation Act created a program for

disabled veterans. The needs of civilians with disabilities were soon included in the Smith-Fess Act in 1920, or also known as the Civilian Vocational Rehabilitation Act. Until the Social Security Act in 1935, the previous programs were not permanent, thus requiring reauthorization every year (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Each year or so, the federal government began to expand its scope of involvement as it pertained to individuals with special needs. The Randolph-Sheppard Act in 1936 and the Wagner-O'Day Act in 1938 authorized individuals that were blind to operate vending stands on federal property as well as required the federal government to purchase certain products from business that employed the blind. Finally, in 1943, the Barden-Lafollette Act expanded vocational services to individuals with mental retardation and mental illness (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Advocacy for the vocational laws proceeded with the Vocational Rehabilitation Amendments, beginning in 1943, with additional Amendments in 1954 and 1965. These amendments created the framework that required states to submit written plans outlining their process for incorporating provisions into practice, as well as to design services that would support individuals with mental illness or retardation. In 1954 and 1965, additional provisions were documented that addressed the funding formula for states that now considered state populations and per capita income. Increased funding, by the way of grants, was now allowable for states in the areas of research and training to support to the needs of individuals enrolled in vocational agencies (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Individuals with physical limitations as well as those with substance abuse were now permitted to participate in vocational programs offered within various agencies as a result of the amendments. The federal government also developed legislation that

supported learners with the Training for Professional Personnel Act of 1959 (Public Law 86-158 and Public Law 85-926) that provided trainings for those that educated students with mental retardation. Additionally, Public Law 85-905, the Captioned Films Act of 1958, created the avenue for accessible films that could be viewed by individuals that were deaf or hard of hearing, while the Teachers for the Deaf Act of 1961 (Public Law 87-276) provided trainings for teachers that educated those same individuals. Grant assistance to educate children with disabilities was outlined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 as well as the State Schools Act (Public Law 89-313; U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

The Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965, or ESEA, was a federal law that was created to level the playing field for students that struggle academically, live in poverty, are transient, do not speak English, or are diagnosed with educational, mental, or physical disabilities. This law equipped state and federal institutions with Title Programs to support students that fell into the categories above. For example, Title I-A is a federal program that supports struggling learners, Title III is designed to support the education of students with limited English proficiency, and Title X supports our students and families that are homeless and ensures their right to access education to name just a few (Elementary and Secondary Education Act, n.d.). The ESEA would later be reauthorized, under the leadership of President George W. Bush in 2001, and be known as the No Child Left Behind Act, or NCLB. No Child Left Behind Act was signed into law on January 8, 2002 and was founded on the principle that the achievement gap among student population was widening among disadvantaged youth and grade level peers and action steps needed to be implemented in order to ensure the academic success for every student

across the nation. No Child Left Behind needed revisions in order to meet the goals it was designed to achieve, thus resulting in the reauthorization by President Barack Obama in 2015, now known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This law became known as the Every Student Succeeds Act. These laws would have significant impact, as will be addressed later, on how our nation created standards for learning as well as how we assessed the progress of our students and subsequently compared state assessment outcomes.

As society evolved, so did the laws that mandated inclusion for all in the workplace and, more importantly, in schools. In 1973, the Vocational Rehabilitation Amendment was renamed the Rehabilitation Act as it now redirected the mission of these programs to the support of those that were considered severely disabled (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). “The Vocational Rehabilitation Act marked a critical beginning to providing equal treatment and reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities in the United States, though its significance was not realized until much later” (Rothstein, 2014, p. 524). The inclusion of those that were socially disadvantaged or behavior offenders were draining federal monies and state resources, thus resulting in the elimination of that area completely. This would be the first instance that the federal government required states that accepted monies to develop and sign the Individualized Written Rehabilitation Program (IWRP), as well as began the discussion about expanding the role beyond strictly vocational training and sought a more comprehensive approach to evaluation and prognosis (Rehabilitation Act, 1973). The Rehabilitation Act has several sections that further specify that employers cannot discriminate against individuals with disabilities. The most prevalent section for students with disabilities is Section 504. This

section ensures that students with medical diagnoses that adversely impact access to learning receive educationally relevant accommodations and modifications in the general education setting to meet their needs. These additional sections of the Rehabilitation Act advanced the civil rights of individuals with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

The history of America is built on the freedom of speech to advocate or protest public laws or situational occurrences. Often times, when an individual or group of individuals dissent from a public law, the right to contest a law is permissible through the means of litigation. The laws that eventually protected the educational rights of those with disabilities were no exception and were steadfastly contested by many. There were three legal cases that acted to precipitate the eventual mandates for individuals with disabilities in the educational environment. The first victory was *Brown versus the Board of Education in 1954*. The Supreme Court decision ceased the practice of segregation in public schools, thus setting the tone for how government would interpret the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment and the subsequent impact of views of citizens and organizations for individuals that were not White or who had disabilities (*Brown v. the Board of Education, 1954*). Racial tensions were heightened before, during, and after the Supreme Court decision to desegregate public schools. This time brought about protests, civil unrest, and discrimination among African Americans that left communities brutalized.

As the Civil Rights movement gained a voice in the 1960s, other groups that were also ignored, such as individuals with disabilities, took their fight for equality to the courts. The Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC) filed suit against the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 1971 in a successful effort to ensure that students

with disabilities could receive free public education in the eyes of the courts (*PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1972*). Meanwhile, another legal battle further elevated the shared mission for students with disabilities when the litigation of *Mills versus the Board of Education of the District of Columbia* began in 1972 (Arocho, 2012). This class action lawsuit challenged the Board of Education after it denied enrollment to several students who exhibited adverse emotional behaviors or cognitive deficits. The school district's argument stemmed from its inability to appropriate funds and resources to support atypical learners. The courts ruled that the lack of funding and resources did not negate the Board's responsibility to educate all learners that were entitled to a free public school education. This ruling mandated that the Board of Education for the District of Columbia design and implement a comprehensive plan that would ensure that students with disabilities received educational services and supports equal to their peers (Arocho, 2012).

This particular ruling led to additional provisions under the law that Congress would pass in 1975, known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, which mandated free and appropriate education for all students ages 3-21 with disabilities (Individuals with Disability Act, 1975). This law would be later known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, and would become the most prevalent educational law to protect students and their parents as it pertains to the specialized and related services to which a student was entitled too. The law stipulated that schools that accept federal monies must adhere to the six principles of IDEA to maintain compliance. In addition to the mandate that all students are entitled to a free and appropriate public school education, the law held educators inherently responsible for

identifying students who are suspected of having a disability and referring those students to the appropriate entity in order to receive a valuable evaluation that address the areas of suspicion. Additional principles of IDEA direct that students that are found eligible for services will receive an IEP that specifies the goals and services that the student, parents, and teachers will work toward using specialized instruction; students will be placed in the least restrictive environment for specialized instruction and learn alongside nondisabled peers when possible; parents and the student, when age appropriate, will be included in the educational decision-making process as an equal team member; and, parents have a legal right to file a formal complaint, known as due process, when they believe the educational needs of their child are not appropriately designed or implemented or if they believe their child has been wrongly suspended or expelled ("Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)," n.d.). Four distinct parts, A through D, are also components to this law that further outline the provisions and expectations for protecting the educational rights of students and parents. The Office of Special Education Programs, OSEP, is the main governing organization that is tasked with ensuring that the foundations of IDEA are understood under Part A. Part B of IDEA fosters the legal stipulations that ensure the education of students with disabilities, ages 3-21, whereas Part C speaks to the legal guidelines for supporting children birth through 2 years of age. Part C was an amendment in 1986 to IDEA that provided identification and subsequent services to infants, toddlers, and their families. Finally, Part D highlights the activities and resources that are available to educational institutions so that each one may add additional value and supports to the programs already in place (American Psychological Association, n.d.).

The authorization of Americans With Disabilities Act, signed by President George H.W. Bush in 1990, fostered even greater momentum for communities seeking to gain equal rights for individuals with disabilities. Known as the ADA, the Americans With Disabilities Act made it illegal for employers to discriminate against employees or candidates being considered for hire due to any physical or mental disabilities. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission stated that organizations are required to make “reasonable accommodations to applicants and employees who need them because of their disabilities, unless doing so would cause undue hardship” (“Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990,” n.d.). The laws that have been established throughout the past century have created the upward trajectory for equal rights among all citizens in the work environment as well as in the educational setting. The Supreme Court rulings engraved in the minds of school communities across that nation that students with disabilities were entitled to the same provisions given to all people under the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment. As the provisions of IDEA clearly state, students with disabilities are entitled to free and appropriate public education in a manner that supports their distinct learning deficits through the implementation of skilled intervention, modifications, or accommodations to general education curriculum while allowing for due process when parents disagree with process decisions related to programming or instruction. As the laws to govern policies to protect the equal rights of all continue to develop in the educational environment, so do the standards for learning in the general education setting. It is valuable to process how stakeholders from both sides of the aisle work to ensure that the needs of many address the needs of the few.

## **Learning Standards and State Mandates for Educational Classifications**

Meta-analyses of research conducted have focused on the relationships between parental involvement and academic achievements (Porumbo, 2013; Shute, et al, 2011). Conclusions from this focused research indicated that school districts should focus on examining the professional roles of teachers as well as the strategies school districts are utilizing to involve parents in order to collaborate to ensure that both home and school share the responsibility for student outcomes.

The process for dissecting the level at which parents are able to engage and support the learning of their children parallels the process that educational leaders have put in place to increase learning outcomes. For parents of students with educational disabilities, parental involvement may become unbalanced when the current learning standards and educational classifications are factored in.

The reauthorization of IDEA in 1997 and the No Child Left Behind Act in 2004 were designed to address the achievement gap among at-risk students and students with typical abilities while creating avenues to support the goal that all students, regardless of cognitive ability, across the nation, would be proficient by the 2014. However, NCLB failed to recognize how science and environment plays a substantial role in a child's ability to learn. While the creation of state standards allows children to access the same instruction, thus leveling the playing field in theory, the expectation that all children learn at the same rate and meet the deadline for proficiency by 2014 set the stage for failure (Wang, Beckett, & Brown, 2006). As a result of these mandates, students with special needs were catapulted into the limelight. This diverse subgroup must also have access to general education curriculum at grade level or the closest equivalent possible. These

mandates and the subsequent impact became even more relevant as the country took the first steps toward common state standards.

The National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices in collaboration with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) reviewed the current state of academic rigor beginning in 2008 in an “effort to ensure all students, regardless of where they live, are graduating high school prepared for college, career, and life” (Common Core Standards Initiative, 2016, p. 1). As a result, it was determined that the initiative would focus on building standards that were: (a) research and evidenced based; (b) clear, understandable, and consistent; (c) aligned with college and career expectations; (d) based on rigorous content and application of knowledge through higher-order thinking skills; (e) built upon strengths and lessons of current state standards; and (f) informed by the other top performing countries in order to prepare all students for success in our global economy and society (Common Core Standards, 2015).

According to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Missouri adopted Common Core Standards in 2010 to elevate the expectations for students in grades K through 12 for English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics (Linkon, 2017). Change within any private or public entity is difficult and perhaps more intense for stakeholders when you are discussing change that impacts children, regardless of the positive or negative implications. The changes made to the standards for how Missourians design instruction and evaluate our student growth and teacher effectiveness were intended to storm our school hallways during the 2014-2015 school year; however, in 2015 Missourians opted out of Common Core standards and created new Missouri Learning Standards that would be implemented in the fall of 2016. Students would

participate in assessments based upon the new standards in the spring of 2018 (Burnette, 2016). As the issue of Common Core standards was debated and the impact reviewed, our teachers were tasked with using the standards to design instruction for all students, including students with educational disabilities. According to the developers of the Common Core State Standards, the framework was established to prepare all students for a global society of academic rigor, including students with disabilities. The actual document that introduces the standards includes a detailed section, Application to Students With Disabilities, that shares,

“students with disabilities must be challenged to excel within the general education curriculum and be prepared for success in their post school lives, including college and/or careers...Therefore, how these high standards are taught is of the utmost importance in reaching this diverse group of students” (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2016, p.1).

This section further notates that in order for students with disabilities to properly access the rigorous instruction aligned with Common Core State Standards, students must have access to supports and related services that allow them to access the general education curriculum, as well as an IEP that includes the specific use of skilled interventions to address deficits that are implemented by highly qualified teachers trained in appropriate areas of weakness (Common Core State Standards, 2015).

The standards above give pause to consider how students that have cognitive deficits, language impairments, autism, or learning disabilities can meet the expectations of typically developing peers. Robust discussions amongst legislators, administrators, and regular and special education teachers have been conveyed throughout research

documenting the various perspectives regarding the impact of Common Core standards for students with educational disabilities. Mitchel (2015) and Beal (2014) both argued that special education teachers shared mixed reviews regarding the impact of Common Core for students receiving special education services; however, concerns are collectively noted in reference to standardized assessments that indicate all students are expected to complete the same assessments regardless of documented needs for modifications and accommodations. Additionally, Mitchell shared that parents of students with educational disabilities were going to be held to the same achievement standards as their typically developing peers without taking into account the additional supports and time that are necessary to effectively impact skill development for students with disabilities (Mitchell, 2015). Beals (2014) noted, “though most Common Core goals are abstract and schematic, collectively they constitute a one-size fits-all approach that, in practice, has severely straightjacketed America’s special needs students” (p. 1).

The adoption of Common Core Standards sheds new light on how special education administrators and teachers design, write, and implement IEP goals. New trends encourage educators to include standards-based IEP goals that are aligned with Common Core Standards with measurable objectives that will enhance student learning. This process requires special education teachers to be familiar with the general education curriculum, specifically their state content standards, in addition to state assessments used for calculating adequate yearly progress, in order to effectively make decisions about the student’s progress as it relates to grade-level expectations.

As states continue to grapple with how to systemically introduce and maintain consistency in the implementation of the Common Core standards for all students while

ensuring adherence to high-stakes testing, numerous voices can be heard denouncing the efficacy of these new mandates. Ravitch (2016) wavered on her perceptions regarding the various federal programs designed to educate all students across the nation. Ravitch was the Assistant Secretary of Education under the presidency George H.W. Bush and favored No Child Left Behind until she realized the goal for all students to reach proficiency was unattainable. She further explained that the unveiling of the Common Core standards showed promise as they would allow all students to access the same information, thus resulting in narrowing the achievement gap among racial and socioeconomic groups. Just as with No Child Left Behind, she was confident that the new standards are as equally as flawed. Ravitch continued that the development of Common Core was rushed and has demonstrated no positive impact in achieving the goals it set forth to achieve, especially when the needs of those with special needs as well as English Language Learners are ignored. Ravitch concluded that our nation must stop spending billions of dollars on programs that only further alienate the most vulnerable groups and direct our focus to the vivid racial and poverty lines that exist within the educational system if our nation ever hopes to implement real change. Learning standards across academic environments do not necessarily allow students with educational disabilities equal access to increased learning outcomes while keeping this diverse subgroup entangled in a system that requires them to learn the same information, engage in the same level of high-stakes testing to showcase their strengths and weaknesses, and wait to be compared to their nondisabled peers.

Parents of students with disabilities are compounded with emotions regarding the health and well-being of their child while being expected to navigate a system of criteria-

specific laws that, again, identifies their child as atypical. Parents put a lot of trust in schools to ensure that their child with educational disabilities is provided with the appropriate level of support to ensure their academic and social growth while continuously worrying that their child's disability does not define them in the school community setting, is making friends and viewed positively by peers, is included in general education activities, and is kept safe (Taub, 2017).

“The role of parents with a child with a disability shows a level of complexity and intensity not generally found in the general population...learning how to provide the education and supports that their children need is an ongoing and frequently frustrating process” (Collier, Keefe, & Hirrel, 2015, p. 120).

As Epstein (2007) has outlined for us, each of the six types of parent involvement plays an instrumental role in the success of a child. Communication and decision making are the two types of involvement that are immediately tested when a parent gives permission for their child to participate in the special education evaluation process. Communication between the general education and special education professionals and the parents of the child with a suspicion of a disability sets the tone for feelings of inclusion, comfort, and support for all individuals throughout the process. Parents rely on the knowledge and expertise of their teachers and leaders to guide them through this arduous process and if positive communication is breached, on either parties' end, and for whatever reason, future parent involvement may be adversely impacted. Similarly, decision making is also tested at the conclusion of the special education evaluation process. As Epstein clarified, decision-making is vital to the success for positive parent involvement and results in the inclusion and collaboration between parents and school

members. Along with communication, a positive decision making process can have a direct impact of future levels of parent involvement.

“In 2013-14, the number of children and youth ages 3-21 receiving special education services was 6.5 million, or about 13 percent of all public school students. Among students receiving special education services, 35 percent has specific learning disabilities” (The Condition of Education, 2016). These statistics are vital to educators as classrooms reflect a wide array of abilities and require differentiated instruction from our educators. Classroom teachers are on the front lines for meeting the needs of all students in their diverse classrooms. As the nation adopts Common Core guidelines or state-specific standards for teaching and learning, educators must also remain cognizant of the needs of learners who are classified as a student with an educational disability. The classroom teacher must have knowledge of the disability and the subsequent impact on learning while demonstrating a strong ability to make accommodations and modifications to support that student across all areas of learning and assessment. The positive collaboration between teachers and parents is vital to student growth and teachers are at the helm of that ship. Collier, Keefe, and Hirrel (2015) completed a case study that asked teacher candidates to reflect on in-home visits with parents and their perceptions of the home to school communication. Teacher candidates revealed in their reflections that parents of students with IEPs were concerned about the professional jargon that was utilized throughout IEP meetings, leading to the conclusion that stronger partnerships between home and school should be prioritized. “Forming partnerships between educators and these parents continues to be difficult to achieve and successfully sustain” (Collier et al., 2015, p. 120). This partnership may influence how our students with

educational disabilities access their learning environments, in both general and special education settings, as well as contribute to their progress on IEP goals.

### **Model for Parental Involvement**

The research of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) expanded upon the literature for parental involvement and the correlation to school performance for students in the elementary grades. Their research specifically focused on what contributes to parents initiating involvement in their child's education and how that level of involvement impacts school outcomes. They developed a model for the parental involvement process in 1995, with several revisions until 2010, that sheds light on what barriers may exist that impede such involvement. Their model reflects five levels that address why families do and do not become involved, what families do when they are involved, and how does that involvement positively impact student outcomes (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) began with Level 1, detailing the three major factors that may influence the variety and frequency of family involvement. Those factors include parents' (a) personal motivators, (b) perceptions of invitations to be involved, and (c) life context variables. As we dissect the first area, personal motivators, we learn that the role construction and sense of efficacy that define motivators are steeped in a parent's personal experiences with school, the current makeup of their family unit, and any specific instances that have recently occurred in their child's school experience that have either left a positive or negative perception in their own mind. Role construction refers to the parent's belief about what they are supposed to do as a parent of a child in school, while self-efficacy is the parent's belief about how their involvement may positively impact their child's education. For example, research has

determined that parents believe their role in helping their children with daily tasks of homework acts as a precipitant for involvement. “Findings that parents often continue their involvement in children’s homework despite concerns about personal limitations or children’s learning difficulties underscore the power of role construction as a motivator of involvement” (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001).

The second area that was defined speaks to the parent’s perception of the invitations from the school and their child that influences their involvement. The researchers discussed the need for parents to feel welcome when they enter school building and for the classroom teachers to extend direct invitations for parents to be included on collaborations between school and home. Additionally, the researchers conveyed that verbal and nonverbal communication, reflecting the need for support or general feelings about school, on the part of the child plays a significant role in the inclusion of parents. The third area, life context variables, explains that there are various reasons for a parent’s involvement in school, including a parent’s belief that their own knowledge or skills may not be sufficient enough to meet the level needed to actively participate in school activities, thus causing them to refrain from engagement. The time and energy a parent can contribute to parental involvement activities as well as the cultural differences among families reflect that variety of perceptions that exist and influence level of involvement. A subset to Level 1, the researchers included Level 1.5, specifying how parents demonstrate involvement to their children. These forms are evident in (a) personal and family values, goals, expectations, and aspirations the families instill in their child; (b) involvement in home activities that align with school work; and

(c) parent involvement in school activities does not necessarily correlate to involvement and impact (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) further outlined the impact of parent involvement on student achievement with Level 2 and Level 3. Level 2 of their model focused on the learning mechanism that parents use during activities that support student success. The four main components of this mechanism are encouragement, modeling, reinforcement, and instruction. Level 3 of the model notated how important it is for students to perceive their parents' use of these components in order to positively identify with their parents' beliefs and behaviors. If a child perceives their parents' encouragement or commitment to educational importance, then the child can effectively internalize that belief and put forth the effort for academic success as a result. The next level of their model, known as Level 4, outlined the four beliefs and behaviors of students that impact academic success. The first belief is that students must demonstrate academic self-efficacy, thus creating an internal barometer to address challenges head on with the confidence that the student is capable of achievement and will persist in their quest. A student's intrinsic motivation to learn is the second belief that influences academic success. The researches asserted that highly effective learners have a genuine interest in learning, thus elevating motivation and engagement in academic content. Self-regulatory skills were then discussed as the third attribute that contributes to academic success of students. These skills are deemed valuable as a student's behaviors support their ability to organize materials, use time effectively and efficiently, and set personal academic goals needed for achievement. The last belief encompassed the notion that students are advocates for their own learning. These students will ask for clarity or assistance with

comprehension and learn how to work with others in a group to achieve a common goal. The final level of this model, Level 5, spoke to the overarching goal of parental involvement and student achievement. This level emphasized how parental involvement influences a student's individual beliefs and behaviors, thus reflecting positive student outcomes.

While numerous researchers support and contribute to the findings of Epstein (2007), Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2015), not everyone is convinced that parental involvement positively contributes to the academic and social growth of children. For example, Robinson and Harris (2014) argued that the common acts that society perceives as parent involvement (i.e., attending conferences, volunteering at school functions) do not directly correlate to higher grades or test scores. Their research included a longitudinal survey of American families from 1980 to 2002. Their analysis of results concluded that neither race nor socioeconomic status directly correlated to increased performance when conventional parental involvement techniques were implemented. Their findings set off a firestorm for proponents who strongly condemned their findings. Parents, professors, researchers, and writers sounded off in numerous op-ed articles to counteract the findings of Robinson and Harris. Walker (2014) was one of the first to respond to the overture that parental involvement is "overrated." He detailed how the research conducted by Robinson and Harris used large amounts of data focusing on test data to draw such specific conclusions, thus diminishing the value.

Similar positive outcomes exist when we assess the impact of parental involvement for students with disabilities. In addition to higher grades and test scores, Burke (2012) highlighted the benefits of parental involvement as it relates to parents of

children with special needs. Burke stated that involvement increases homework completion, increases the preparation of students for program placements, and decreases the inappropriate placements for students with disabilities. Most notably, the author documented that instances of due process decrease as a result of parental involvement. The complexities that arise in the educational and home environment for students with educational needs may seem daunting to educators and parents alike. As discussed previously, parents are at an automatic disadvantage when learning to navigate the legal system as it pertains to educational disabilities. While the outcomes for positive involvement may be similar to grade-level peers, the extra time and effort that is required for parents and teachers to support learners with deficits are not fluid. There is no “one size fits all” approach to positive parental involvement that consistently works for students with educational disabilities. Some parents will spend hours upon hours working with their child on homework tasks compared to another parent whose main priority is communicating with teachers and staff to ensure that the appropriate services are implemented with fidelity for their child.

### **Benefits and Barriers of Parental Involvement**

Van Voorhis, Maier, Epstein, and Llyod (2013) completed a review of 95 research studies that focused on understanding “the nature and effects of family involvement on young children’s literacy, math, and social-emotional skills” (p. 1). The outcomes of this review indicated that family involvement is positively linked to academic growth during the early learning years and that families from diverse backgrounds can support their children in making gains with provided with specific support (Van Voorhis et al., 2013). The models for parental involvement in Epstein’s

(2007) framework for involvement set the standard for school districts and communities to utilize to support the positive partnerships and growth among students, parents, and families. When these types of involvement are addressed in the design and implementation of school-based parental involvement programs, research indicates that all school community members benefit. Specifically for students, they are more aware of their parents' involvement and exhibit more respect for the parameters they set, improved attendance, awareness of their role of in partnerships, increased skills in communicating with adults, completing homework at home, and an increase in self-esteem. With the integration of programs to support parent involvement, parents become more confident in their parenting skills and gain an increased monitoring of child's progress, greater understanding of instructional goals, as well as an increased ownership as a partner in the school community. In addition to student and parent benefits to parental involvement programs, teachers are also positively impacted. Teachers gain knowledge of the diversity among families, appreciation of parent and teacher communication networks, development of new methods for collaborating with families, and a greater respect for the home environment and schedules (Epstein, 2007).

Epstein's (2007) research, in tandem with common sense, postulated that the more involved parents are with their child (ren's) education the greater the outcomes for academic success. Research supports this common sense ideology with facts that reveal that students with positive parent involvement achieve higher grades and test scores, are more likely to be promoted to the next grade level, attend school regularly, have better social skills, exhibited fewer behavior problems, and graduate and attend postsecondary schools (Dervarcis & O'Brien, 2011). There are additional impacts as well: (a) it allows

parents monitor school and classroom activities and to coordinate their efforts with teachers to encourage acceptable classroom behavior and ensure that the child completes schoolwork; (b) teachers of students with highly involved parents tend to give greater attention to those students and they are more likely to identify at earlier stages problems that might inhibit student learning; and (c) parental involvement positively affects teachers' self-perception and job satisfaction (Child Trends, 2012). Parent involvement for students in the pre-primer and early elementary school years is more evident compared to middle and high school years. As children mature, they grow more autonomous and require less or desire less involvement from their parents as it pertains to assistance with homework or visibility in the academic environment (Park & Holloway, 2013). School communities should infer that the benefits of parental involvement should be capitalized upon during the early stages of development within the school environment.

On the opposite end of the spectrum lie the barriers to parental involvement that may hinder a student's academic progress and achievement. These barriers are shared among parents of students with and without educational disabilities. The barriers that impede involvement stretch across the continuum of socioeconomic status (SES), culture, and ethnicity. Families living at or below the poverty level are more likely to live in neighborhoods with higher crime, abuse, and neglect rates, often leading to decreased parental involvement in urban school communities (Savage, 2007).

According to the U. S. Census Bureau (2014), the official poverty rate for 2014 totaled 46.7 million people. This number equals to 14.8% our population equaling approximately 81, 730 families and 315,804 individuals impacted. Poverty statistics for

2014 were further dissected by race and revealed that greater than 244,000 individuals were White, 195,208 were White (non-Hispanic), 41,112 were Black, 17,790 were Asian; 55,504 were Hispanic (any race). Females in poverty were documented at 161,164 compared to males at 154,639 and individuals between the ages of 18 to 64 total 196,254 (13.5%) with 73,556 (21.1%) under the age of 18 and almost 46,000 (10%) for those 65 years and older. In addition, for those individuals, aged 18 to 64 years of age, more than 15,000 had a disability with almost 180,000 with no disability (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Updated poverty statistics included for 2015 detailed the poverty rate at 13.5% which was down 1.2% compared to 2014. U. S. Census Bureau from 2015 revealed a decrease across all major categories. The official poverty rate decreased by 1.2% and 3.5 million less individuals were identified at poverty level). Between 2014 and 2015, poverty rates decreased for all three major age groups. The poverty rate for children under age 18 dropped 1.4 percentage points, from 21.1% to 19.7%. Rates for people aged 18 to 64 dropped 1.1 percentage points, from 13.5 percent to 12.4 percent. Poverty rates for people aged 65 and older decreased 1.1 percentage points, from 10.0 percent to 8.8 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

As our school districts continue to represent a more diverse population of students and families, the cultural and socioeconomic differences that exist, as they pertain to school perceptions and academic customs, may impact how parental involvement is conveyed and portrayed. McDermott and Rothenberg (2000) shared that often parents of children from lower socioeconomic environments may feel that public school communities are biased and specifically designed for middle school America (2000). School communities may make assumptions that a correlation between poverty and

cultural differences leads to decreased parental involvement; however, even with the challenges that poverty brings, research shows that “low-income parents value education as a route to economic and social mobility but their actual involvement often falls short of school expectations” (Drummond & Stipek, 2004).

McDermott and Rothenberg (2000) identified three psychological factors that contribute to the reluctance of low-income urban parents to be involved in their children’s education. They discussed a vital measure for predicting parental involvement that reveals how a family perceives their individual role and responsibilities in supporting their child as well as how families trying to meet the threshold for lower SES status often perceive themselves as outsiders to the school community and relinquish the sole responsibility to educating their child onto the shoulders of the teachers and administrators. The next factor that contributes to parental involvement stems from the parents’ feelings of efficacy. These factors were also highlighted by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005), stating that if parents feel that they have something to offer to increase their child’s learning experience and can positively contribute then they are more likely to participate in school activities compared to those parents who may feel incompetent and ineffective. The last psychological factor that can positively or negatively contribute to the degree to which a parents involve themselves lies within the inviting atmosphere of the school building. The hospitable and welcoming nature of a school translates into parents and community members feeling comfortable and valued as stakeholders, thus elevating their intent and follow-through with participation in educational tasks (McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000).

A research study conducted by Drummond and Stipek (2004) sought to determine the beliefs of low-income families as they related to the parent role in the academic achievements of their children. Their research found that “most parents strongly value involvement in their children's learning”. Their findings aligned to those of Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005), who explained that the beliefs that parents have about involvement in school drives the actual steps they take to engage and assist their children. Drummond and Stipek (2004) speculated that families that fall outside of the strongly valuing involvement may have additional barriers beyond low SES.

Individuals that are not directly impacted by poverty project their biased beliefs about those that are impacted into the school and community environments that they serve. These biased beliefs adversely impact the education of our youth and have real consequences that are translated into negative, discouraging, and exclusionary behaviors and are communicated to low-income parents in countless ways (Lott, 2001). Educators that have never experienced the day-to-day struggles of living in poverty readily assume that parents that do not participate in their child education failed to do so because they lack the care and concern. While this may be an accurate depiction for some parents, those in and out of poverty, the majority of parents want their child's to succeed in school and in life. More often than not, the barriers inhibit the level of parental involvement that researchers deem appropriate to enact. The significant lack of resources readily available to families living in poverty contributes to nonparticipation in the educational setting. Parents living in poverty struggle to access individuals, such as social workers or counselors, who can support families as they attempt to access medical or behavioral health for their children. Families also struggle daily with having adequate funds to

maintain consistent and safe housing along with purchasing food and general necessities. Transportation is also a barrier to involvement for parents who wish to participate in school activities and functions. When parents demonstrate their desire to involve themselves in their child's education but lack the means to do so, resources must be available to overcome such barriers. These resources are often nonexistent or scarce in poorer school communities. There is a significant need for increasing the level and accessibility of such resources for families in these communities. Parents desire to access resources to support their child, negotiate success in school, and to be as equally effective as middle-class parents in communicating with teachers and administrators. The barriers that exist for low-income parents are related to poverty, time restraints, atypical work schedules, heavy family responsibilities, child care and transportation problems, in addition to the barriers of minority ethnicity, color, and language (Lott, 2001).

Cultural diversity surrounds the beliefs and attitudes of parents, teachers, and administrators relative to ethnicity and culture. It will be revealed that the family ethnicity and culture impact the level of parental involvement as well as how those families are perceived by educators and how those perceptions can impede involvement. As noted earlier, communication is vital to sustaining effective partnerships between home and school, thus positively impacting student success. Barriers are noted for those families that have limited to no English proficiency, lack of understanding of the school system, lack of understanding of the home-school partnership, lack of confidence, work interference, negative past experiences with schools, and insensitivity or hostility on the part of the school personnel (Joshi, 2005). For communication between parents and teachers to be meaningful and responsive, it is necessary to understand the cultural

framework of parents' function, since parental attitudes are influenced by cultural and economic factors. Aspects of culture like communication, education, dress, religion, and values for socialization and interactions influence an individual's behavior, values, and attitudes (Joshi, 2005).

Educators must comprehend that each unique culture presents its own belief system for educating its children. Zarate (2007) discovered that Latino parents mentioned life participation more frequently than academic achievement and that they equated involvement in their child's education with involvement in their lives. Parents believed that monitoring their children's lives and providing moral guidance resulted in good classroom behavior, in turn allowed for greater academic learning opportunities (Zarate, 2007). In addition, language barriers between families that are non-English speaking and the school may contribute to the perceived lack of involvement or engagement (Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008). Smith et al. (2008) also acknowledged that Hispanic parents did care about their children's education but were inhibited by a lack of trust, lack of understanding of school procedures, or even their own lack of education. Understanding the students that we teach is imperative when designing programs to promote parental involvement. Salend (1990) showed us that educators do not always possess the current background knowledge of the various cultures of the children they work with and often demonstrate a less-than-ideal sense of respect for such cultures. Difference among communication styles is evident when we assess how teachers in large urban areas relay information home to parents. Linek (1997) shared that communication between teachers and families of lower SES consist of "low intensity" letters and flyers home with minimal face-to-face contact with parents. The author also

stated that this same category of teachers may possess a “We-Them” attitude toward urban parents and do not view them as collaborators in their children’s education.

The barriers that already exist for parental involvement for the general population of families are adversely impacted when additional challenges specific to children with educational disabilities are folded in. Then, the volume of barriers expands. In addition to barriers surrounding SES, culture, and ethnicity, we must now explore the barriers related to the special education process. Parents of children with special needs must navigate through the special education process, from referral to initial evaluation through educational diagnosis and beyond the IEP and everything that occurs in between. There is a wide array of parents who have children with a wide array of disabilities that are individually impacted across the continuum of developmental delays. Children can be adversely impacted cognitively, adaptively, physically, socially, emotionally, behaviorally, and/or academically and may require a variety of special education services. While many students enter the educational system with an obvious disability and have already participated in early intervention evaluations and therapies, many others have not and may not be referred or identified until further along in their academic career. It is important to know that there are variations in parents’ knowledge and experience with the special education process and that those parents who are not knowledgeable about the special education process find themselves at a disadvantage (Thatcher, 2012). Research shows that 70% of parents of students with disabilities believe their children lose special education services because parents are not equipped with adequate knowledge (Burke, 2012).

The federal and state laws mandating the identification and inclusion of students with disabilities in public schools were founded on ensuring equality among learners; yet the process to meet those expectations is arduous, even for the most seasoned special education representative. This process can be overwhelming for families and adversely impact parent involvement. Dependent upon the state in which you reside, the referral process could take weeks, months, or years to fully exhaust the school-based and classroom-based interventions that have been adopted by school districts as a Response to Intervention (RTI) methodology unless an obvious disability is evident or the student is 3-5 years of age. RTI is a three-tier approach that is designed to support learners that are struggling academically and/or behaviorally (RTI Action Network, 2015). After school and classroom-based interventions are exhausted and determined to be unsuccessful, the child can be referred for a special education evaluation and be considered for any of the 14 areas of eligibility based upon evaluation results. If the child is found eligible for an educational identification, a subsequent IEP meeting is scheduled. During this time, IEP team members meet to discuss the adverse educational impacts of the disability and what services will be provided and the frequency of those services. Progress monitoring occurs throughout the duration of the IEP until the annual IEP is scheduled. The educational disability for each student is reviewed every 3 years (Center for Parent Information and Resources, 2015). Each step in the special education process requires parent participation and written permission is required for the evaluation to proceed and for initial services to be implemented.

Federal law mandates that parents are involved in the special education process but has not designed a strategic method to ensure that parents are active participants in

making decisions, supporting IEP goal development, following through with progress monitoring, or maintaining contact with special education teachers and services providers. The overwhelming nature of the special education process correlates to the level of motivation that parents internalize and exhibit with regard to their child's IEP process. Parents may remain motivated to ensure that their child receives the most appropriate special education services without fully understanding how to best advocate for their child at the IEP meeting and vice versa (Burke, 2012). Burke (2012) continued that variability of motivation can be influenced by how receptive the school is to the parent's input. Additional barriers that this author highlighted that may impact the family school partnership, thus impacting parent involvement, includes lack of professional skills and commitment; lack of respect, distrust and poor communication; as well as lack of equality between the parents and the schools. Educators must comprehend the implications for academics and behavior as the result of an educational and/or medical diagnosis for the students that are in their classrooms. Teachers must take ownership, as professionals, in exploring the most appropriate interventions to support their students while demonstrating a sincere commitment to each child's growth. Many parents report a lack of respect and distrust toward school personnel related to the poor experiences during IEP meetings or parents' perception of stereotypes being applied by the school (Burke, 2012).

In line with what research conveys as a barrier for students that are not diagnosed with a disability, distrust often occurs and can stem from ignorance on the part of the school as it pertains to cultural diversity and that lack of knowledge about belief systems. Also evident is the distrust that arises from a previous personal experience that a parent

has encountered with the school. Communication continues to be reported as a common barrier for fostering positive partnerships with over 71% of parents yearning for better communication between home and school. As a result, parents are less likely to participate and engage in the process for their child with special needs (Burke, 2012). Communication and quality partnerships between home and school have been discussed as a positive influence for our students with educational disabilities possibly leading to subsequent positive impact on their educational performance, specifically for the progress made on IEP goals.

### **Effective Practices for Building Parental Involvement**

Identifying the barriers to parent involvement along with the programs to address the issues is one side of the problem. It is vital to put those ideas into practice in order for real change to occur (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Designing programs to establish and maintain parent partnerships is crucial to any school; however, determining the key components that will prove useful requires much research and discussion. Several researchers, including Joyce Epstein, have analyzed the important attributes to enhancing parental involvement programs in schools and developed nation-wide programs to implement. The National Network of Partnership Schools, under the leadership of Epstein, designed One-Year-Action-Plans that outlined specific steps that 39 District Leaders for Partnerships, in collaboration with Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs), supported over 700 school districts across the country for the 2013-2014 school year. A main goal of this program was to develop activities that encourage the partnerships between school and families, from all backgrounds, in an effort to positively impact student achievement. The results of the 2014 data revealed challenges that continue to

exist for establishing and building partnerships (i.e., individual buy-in, funding, English Language Learner families), yet data also demonstrate that individuals at the school level are responding positively to professional development ("National Network of Partnership Schools | Johns Hopkins University School of Education," 2016).

Other researchers within the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement, are seeking to expand the parental involvement programs to include the family unit. The belief is that parental involvement stems deeper than helping with homework and attending teacher conferences. They desire programs that develop stronger family engagement activities and programs within the school communities (Walker, 2014). Henderson and Mapp (2002) reviewed and synthesized a variety of studies specific to parent engagement among diverse backgrounds, thus revealing schools that were successful in building engagement among parents included the following key components: (a) focus on building trusting collaborative relationships among teachers, families, and community members; (b) recognize, respect, and address families' needs, as well as class and cultural differences; and (c) embrace a philosophy of partnership where power and responsibility are shared.

One study of African American mothers' perception of parent participation and alienation resulted in the author stating that the burden to increase parent involvement begins with the school (Purnell, 2009). Involving parents in their children's education should start at the top with district and building leaders. It is imperative to include the family and community engagement activities in professional developments for teachers and administrators in order properly gauge the effectiveness (Hiatt-Michael, 2006). Leaders should involve parents in the planning process while demonstrating and

acknowledging the depths of differences and needs each family possess (Buddy, 2012). One study outlined the steps school board members can take to initiate the consistent parent partnerships within the school setting. These steps include recognizing that all parents, regardless of socioeconomics, culture, or race, want their children to learn; surveying parents and teachers to understand their perspective of parent involvement; developing a common understanding of how parents can best support the learning of their children; and identify barriers to achievements within schools. Additionally, this study explained that leaders should assist teachers in developing homework that incorporates parent involvement, and then they should continue to survey and track and adjust activities to increase parental involvement (Dervarcis & O'Brien, 2011).

Encouraging parents to build supportive home environments, participate in school activities, and communicate with teachers and administrators on shared goals creates a foundation for growth (Buddy, 2012). A recent study focused on the emotional support offered by teachers and the impact on home-to-school-based communication for kindergarten students. The results affirmed the correlation that when there is more emotional support from the teachers the communications between home and school were greater, resulting in less behavior problems (McCormick, et al, 2014). These efforts can transcend into increased participation in parent-teacher organizations or parent-teacher conferences. “Teachers don’t realize that parents are a natural ally for them in managing student behavior and helping them bolster student achievement” (Reid, 2015).

Additional research stated that offering parent classes on effective parenting, creating a parent classroom for daily meetings, and expanding “Family Nights” encourage teachers to invite parents to activities via phone calls instead of letters home promote parent-

teacher communication (Monfredo, 2013). Finally, teachers and parents need to establish a relationship to discuss classroom expectations as well as the teacher's philosophy for education. Communications between parents and teachers should occur in good times, not just bad times (Practical Parent Partnership, 2012).

### **Summary**

This chapter shed light on the various facets of education law, beginning in the early 1900s as the federal government allocated monies to states to support the vocational needs of returning soldiers. The government's role continued to expand to include more specific laws and regulation that provided greater protections for individuals with disabilities. These protections started in the workplace and would later expand into the public education system. Perhaps the greatest contribution to individuals with disabilities arrived in 1975 and was initially known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. This law would later be reauthorized as the Individuals with Disability Education Act or IDEA. This law changed the way public school communities, as well as private entities, approached public education. Individuals with disabilities were afforded equal rights, under this law, to be educated as same aged peers without disabilities. As it continues today, school districts across the nation work to elevate programs to support diverse learners across academic environments.

The laws of our distant past and more recent future led to the federal educational programs that were developed to narrow the ever widening achievement gap among subgroups of students. As the federal education initiative No Left Child Behind reached its timeline goal, new initiatives were shaped, including the development of Common Core Standards that sought to elevate academic expectations while addressing diverse

subgroups. Both initiatives have vignettes of objectives and expectations for students with disabilities; however, the research regarding how Common Core Standards are impacting the academic achievement of students with educational disabilities remains uncertain. Along with the learning standards for students the literature also outlined the state mandates for Missouri and the impact the special education process has on parental involvement.

The literature then focused on the model for parental involvement developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandlar (2005), which detailed the motivating factors that may influence parental involvement throughout a child's educational tenure. Next, the literature analyzed the benefits to parental involvement where balanced with the barriers that often impede parents from engagement in academic activities with their child. The benefits are commonly understood and verbalized by districts as a means to motivate parents to engage themselves in their child's educational experience, yet the barriers are less obvious and often not addressed. This information was coupled with specific data that encompassed special education rates that were analyzed by race, gender, areas of eligibility, and household income. Finally, the literature reviewed best practices to support building partnerships between schools and families. Chapter Three details the methodologies used to conduct this study. Participants, sampling procedures, the research setting and design, instruments, and validity and reliability for instruments will be discussed. The researcher will determine a statistical treatment of the data and provide reasons for the selection. In Chapter Four, data collected from the participants' completion of the surveys are illustrated and discussed. Data will be analyzed and the

research questions will be addressed. Chapter Five presents researchers conclusions and recommendations.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Introduction**

Chapter Two examined the history of laws that were designed and implemented to protect some of our nation's most vulnerable children and adults beginning in the work place and then moving into our education system. These laws, most notably the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1975, ensured students with disabilities were educated equally to peers without disabilities. The research further analyzed the benefits and barriers to parental involvement and reflected upon how parental involvement can impact learning outcomes for students of all diverse learning abilities. As the research conveys, parental involvement for students without educational disabilities has been documented yet the impact for those students with educational disabilities offers room for growth in knowledge. It is of value that research be completed to further analyze and disaggregate data to attempt to better understand the perceptions of teachers relevant to parental involvement for students with educational disabilities.

This study was quantitative and descriptive in nature and represents the gathering of data synthesized in order to ascertain the perceptions of certificated general and special education teachers at the elementary level who educate students with educational disabilities across school communities in the state of Missouri. The researcher sought to analyze teacher perceptions regarding parental involvement for students with educational disabilities. Specifically, the researcher sought to analyze how teachers, certified in general and special education, perceived parental involvement to impact the referral

process for special education identification. Additionally, the researchers looked to analyze how the same group of teachers perceived parental involvement to impact IEP progress for students with educational disabilities. The last area that the researcher sought to analyze was how teachers perceived parental involvement to impact assessment performance for the same group of students.

### **Research Design**

**Background.** In the state of Missouri, the number of students that have been found eligible for special education services through the evaluation process for students ages 3 through 21 was 128,435 for the entire state of Missouri for the 2016-2017 school year. Approximately 12,792 of those students received special education services within the framework of early childhood special education with 115,643 served in either elementary, middle, or high school through the age of 21 (*Students with Disabilities Child Count, 2017*). Those numbers played a major role in selecting the elementary school level, Grades K through 5, as the environment in which conduct this research. While early intervention may be advantageous to progress in the academic and social environments, numbers continue to indicate that a larger sum of students are initially referred to the special education process beginning in the elementary school years.

In conjunction with what the numbers above indicated, additional factors supported the researcher's decision to analyze teacher perceptions of parental involvement for students with education disabilities at the elementary level compared to early childhood or secondary. When students enter into elementary school without an obvious disability or previous identification of a student with an IEP, they are part of the whole unit of learners that will be observed and assessed as the school year progresses

without bias or previous knowledge on the part of the general education teacher. During these primer years, regular education teachers are establishing rapport with students, assessing their students' academic skills and prior knowledge in order to differentiate instruction to support consistent academic progress. When deficits in learning are suspected, as early as kindergarten or as late as fifth grade, and regular education classroom interventions are exhausted, referrals for special education are often the next steps. Teachers at the elementary level are often the first observers of a student's learning ability and the first individuals to collaborate with school-based intervention teams to address student needs. Since universal preschool is not federally or state mandated and parents are not required to enroll their young children in preschool, the elementary school teachers may have more experience with larger groups of students who can provide a baseline for how parental involvement may impact the special education referral process as well as progress on goals on IEPs.

As discussed earlier, if a child is found eligible for special education a subsequent IEP is written to address deficits through skilled interventions provided by special education teachers and/or related service providers (i.e. speech-language pathologist, occupational therapist, or physical therapist). During the IEP process, placement considerations are a mandated component that will be discussed. Federal guidelines mandate that the least restrictive environment must be considered and implemented for students identified. As students are newly identified at the elementary school level and least restrictive environments are implemented, it is likely that more students than not will remain in the regular education setting to receive their special education services.

For school age children that have been identified with educational disabilities, the least restrictive placement is known as inside the regular education classroom at least 80% of the time. This allows the student to remain in the regular education classroom for any special education services from special educators either within the framework of the general education curriculum or removed for small increments of time throughout the week. This placement sets the stage for collaboration between regular and special education teachers in order to meet the needs of students with educational disabilities. The implementation of least restrictive environment extends the balance of interactions and experience among regular and special educators and the students, thus making the analysis of perceptions from both lenses more likely and authentic.

**Participants.** The participants in this study represented certificated educators in the areas of regular and special education from the St. Louis Region 8. This region offered a diverse representation of school communities that could be extended beyond the lines of Missouri. Several factors were analyzed when the selection of Region 8 was finalized, including total enrollment, student demographics, and teacher characteristics. There were 16 school districts with 292-3,000 students, 12 school districts with 3,001-10,000 students, and 10 school districts with 10,001-22,506 students enrolled.

Of the 38 school districts in this region, the following ethnicities were documented as part of state-mandated core data: Asian, Black, and White. Additional ethnicities, Hispanic and Multi-Race, were also documented for six school districts. It should be noted that six of the 38 school districts did not report any student racial demographics. The lack of data was likely due to the majority of students enrolled in

those school districts as being Black or White thus creating a sample size of additional ethnicities that was too small to report.

Six school districts reported an Asian demographic that ranged from 7.10% of students enrolled to 13.8 %. There were eight school districts that reported no data or 0% as it reflected students enrolled that were Black. Two of those school districts served a large majority of students that were Black, thus causing any additional ethnicities that may have been enrolled to be so minimal that they could not be accurately represented in the small sample size. The remaining six school districts that reported 0% of students enrolled being Black had a majority of students enrolled as White, thus making the sample size of Black students enrolled to be accurately depicted. The other school districts reported the following percentages of Black students: six school districts were represented with 1-10%; eight school districts with 11-20%; three school districts with 21-50%; three school districts with 51-80%; and three school districts with reported enrollment of Black students greater than 81%. As mentioned above, there are two additional school districts that did not report data given the majority of students enrolled were Black, therefore, those districts would likely fall into the range greater than 81%.

Three of the 38 school districts were noted to report no data for student demographics for students enrolled that were White. This report was likely due to similar outcomes noted above. The three school districts served a majority of students that were White, thus making the sample size for other ethnicities too small to report. There were five school districts that reported 20% or less of students enrolled as being White; two school districts that reported 21-50% of students as being White; eight school districts

reported 51-70% of their student population as White; and 16 school districts in Region 8 represented students that were White as between 71% and 94.4%.

There were three school districts that had a sample size large enough to report for students enrolled that were Hispanic. The percentages were 6.10%, 16.30%, and 9.3%. Similarly, there were five school districts that reported students enrolled that classified themselves as Multi-Race. Those percentages were as follows: 6.20%, 6.30%, 8.10%, 9.2%, and 7.6%. The remaining 35 and 33 school districts likely had a sample size that was too small to accurately depict the prevalence of these additional ethnicities. The total enrollment for the state of Missouri for the 2015-2016 school year was 885,148. The student demographics were as follows: 1.90% Asian, 16.10% Black, 5.90% Hispanic, 3.20% Multi-Race, and 72.30% White.

Another district demographic that was pertinent to analyze to ensure that the region in which data were collected was diverse enough to draw inferences for across other regions pertained to the percentage of students that receive Free or Reduced Lunch as part of their school day. All but one school district reported percentage of students that were eligible to receive Free or Reduced Lunch for the 2015-2016 school year in Region 8 in Missouri. There were 10 school districts that reported 25% or less of students that received Free and Reduced Lunch; 15 school districts reported 26-50% of students were eligible for this program; seven school districts reported 51-75% of students enrolled are eligible; and five school districts with 75-90% of students enrolled in their districts were eligible. The state of Missouri reported 51.7% of students across the state were eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch.

The last area that was vital to deciding on Region 8 from which to collect data was the characteristics of educators across this region. Each of the 38 school districts reported the percentage of teachers in their district that held a master's degree or higher as well as the average years of teaching experience. There were nine school districts that reported 37%-60% of their teachers held master's degree or higher; eight school districts that reported 61%-70%; 14 school districts that reported 71-80%; six school districts that reported 81%-90%; and one school district that reported 95% of their teachers held master's degree or higher. School districts also reported the average years of experience among educators. Seven school districts reported an average of 9-10 years of experience; 23 school districts reported 11-13 years of experience; seven school districts reported 14-15 years of experience; and one school district reported an average of 17 years of experience for teachers. The data reviewed for the state of Missouri depicts similar data compared to Region 8. The percentage of teachers with master's degree or higher was 58.7 for the 2015-2016 school year with an average of 12.3 years of experience.

When comparing these data for Region 8 to the data for the entire state of Missouri it is likely that the data collected from Region 8 offered a diverse sample of participants, thus allowing the information gained from this study to be extended to a variety of school districts beyond the rivers and highways of Missouri. Both female and male certificated educators in the area of regular and special education at the elementary level were included in this sample population with a variance of years of teaching experience.

**Survey.** The researcher developed a survey to assess the perceptions of teachers related to parental involvement as it pertains to the identification, programming process,

and assessment outcomes for students with educational deficits. The survey contained questions specific to the special education referral process, IEP programming and progress, and assessment outcomes whereby parental involvement appears to be helpful. As the research has shown, parental involvement in education has tremendous impact for students with and without educational disabilities. As a result of such involvement, educators across environments and specialties should attest that the collaboration between parents and teachers is positively reflected upon the academic performance of students. The degree to how valuable teachers perceive that involvement as influential on various outcomes of learning (i.e., general education studies, IEP progress) was the information being sought from this research study. The survey questions developed for certificated teachers sought to determine the value that teachers placed upon a variety of learning opportunities for students with educational disabilities.

The introductory demographics portion of the survey sought to create a profile of participants that would assist in disaggregating survey data to analyze findings and make recommendations. Demographic information that was pertinent were the ages of the participants, years of teaching experience, and areas of certification. The ages and years of experience allowed for the researcher to analyze trends surrounding perceptions that may differ to younger teachers compared those that were more seasoned. Areas of teaching certification also allowed for analysis of trends about groups of participants that held regular education and special education certifications and the subsequent attitudes of parental involvement across those lines.

The survey was separated into three distinct sections that intended to gain teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of parental involvement for students with educational

disabilities. The first section pertained to how teachers perceive parental involvement and its impact during the initial special education process. The initial special education process pertains to the initial referral process when either an agency member (i.e., classroom teacher, counselor, or administrator) or parent suspects a student/child has a disability, the subsequent special education evaluation that may occur, and the initial IEP that is developed as a result of a student being found eligible for an educational disability. The second section of the survey questions sought to gain teacher perceptions of the impact of parental involvement on the progress a student made specific to his/her IEP goals. The third section of survey questions pertained to how teachers perceive parental involvement specific to assessment outcomes for students with educational disabilities. These three sections were directly aligned with the intent of this research and sought to gain knowledge on the perceptions of regular and special education teachers with regard to parental involvement across the initial special education process, IEP goal progress, and outcomes on classroom, district, and state assessments.

**Consent.** Prior to disseminating surveys to certificated staff, the researcher completed and submitted a formal request to the Research and Review Board at Southwest Baptist University to review the research proposal ensuring the research methods adhered to all components of human ethics. Once the research was formally reviewed and approved, the researcher provided each superintendent, for the districts outlined above, with a written letter, distributed via e-mail, outlining a brief background, intent, and goals of the proposed research and seeking permission to invite certificated employees to participant. Once permission was received from the superintendent, the

group of certificated regular and special education teachers was contacted via e-mail using the questionpro.com survey generator. Completing the survey provided consent.

**Selection/Sampling.** There was a total of 38 school districts requested to participate in this research; however, only six school districts approved this research through completion. Surveys were disseminated via an electronic system to approximately 2,156 certificated teachers in the areas of regular and special education across the elementary schools that approved this research request. Sample randomization was employed in order to remove researcher bias. Confidentiality of participants was maintained throughout this process. The researcher utilized the electronic survey generator, questionpro.com, to disseminate the survey to all participants. This electronic survey generator allowed participants' responses to remain confidential even though the information was disseminated to their personal or professional e-mails. This survey generator was password secured, thus increasing the confidentiality component. Additionally, the researcher sent friendly reminders, via e-mail, with regard to the completion of the surveys every 4 days for 3 weeks in an effort to increase the response rate. At the end of 3 weeks, survey data were received and analyzed with the assistance of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program.

### **Instrumentation**

**Validity and Reliability/Face and Content Validity.** This field of research was generated by the researcher's personal experiences in the field of education over 15 years as a special education provider and administrator for students with educational disabilities. The experience, expertise, federal mandates, and best practices in the field of special education drove the interest in seeking the perceptions of teachers as they

pertained to how parental involvement may affect learning outcomes across regular and special education environments. Questions were aligned with the research examined in Chapter Two regarding parental involvement across learning environments, locations, socioeconomic, and racial lines.

**Panel.** The researcher disseminated the survey questions to a select of group of three individuals with exceptional credentials in the areas of regular and special education to review the intended survey questions to help establish face and content validity to ensure that the questions disseminated to teachers aligned with the research questions. The first expert was selected given her years as an elementary school teacher and her experience as a regular education teacher who consistently supported students with educational disabilities in her general education environment within an at-risk school community. The second expert had multiple areas of certifications and experiences across regular and special education environments. This individual began her career at the elementary level as a speech-language pathologist for 3 years before obtaining her certification in the area of regular education and transitioning to the role of a special education administrator for almost 14 years. She also maintained her certification as an elementary school principal and worked collaboratively with general education administrators and staff to meet the needs of all students across environments. The third expert was a special education teacher for a large public system. She had 12 years of experience working with students, across age groups, with a variety of mild to significant educational disabilities. She was also a teacher who worked tirelessly to establish and maintain relationships with families in an effort to grow student learning.

Using the Rovinelli and Hambleton’s (1977) Index of Item-Objective Congruence, these individuals rated the efficacy of each question using a +1 (*item clearly taps objective*), 0 (*unsure/unclear*), -1 (*item clearly does not tap objective*) scale. Scores of 0.6 or higher were kept as the experts agreed that the questions aligned with the intent of the research, whereas, scores below 0.6 were revised or thrown out. The results of the “experts” are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*Index of Item-Objective Congruence*

Subset Scale: How teachers perceive parental involvement and its impact during the initial special education process (i.e., initial referral-initial evaluation-initial IEP).

| <u>Survey Item</u>  | <u>Results Average</u> |
|---|------------------------|
| To what degree is parental involvement effective during the initial special education process (i.e. initial referral-initial evaluation-initial IEP)? | 1.0                    |
| During the initial referral process, parental involvement is valuable.  | .33                    |
| Parents should be involved during the initial special education process.  | 1.0                    |
| Parents should not be involved in the initial special education process.  | 1.0                    |
| Parental involvement has no value during the initial special education process.   | 1.0                    |
| Parental involvement during the initial special education process has no impact on the process.   | .67                    |
| Parental involvement has value during the initial special education process.  | 1.0                    |
| Parental involvement during the initial special education process impacts outcomes.   | .67                    |
| Parental involvement during the initial special education process does not impact outcomes.   | .67                    |

Table 1 Continued

*Index of Item-Objective Congruence*

Subset Scale: How do teachers perceive the impact of parental involvement on the progress a student makes specific to his/her IEP goals?

| <u>Survey Item</u>  | <u>Results Average</u> |
|---|------------------------|
| To what degree does parental involvement affect student progress on IEP goals?                                | 1.0                    |
| Parental involvement does not impact student progress on the IEP goals.                                       | 1.0                    |
| Parents should be aware of their child's IEP goals.   | 1.0                    |
| Parents should not be aware of their child's IEP goals.   | .67                    |
| IEP goal progress for students is reflective of parental involvement.   | 1.0                    |
| Parental involvement during the initial special education process has no impact on the process.               | 1.0                    |
| IEP goal progress for students is not reflective of parental involvement.                                     | 1.0                    |
| Students make progress toward their IEP goals because their parents are involved.                             | 1.0                    |
| Students who do not make progress on their IEP goals do not have parents that are involved.                   | 1.0                    |
| Suggested question by "experts": Students who make progress on their IEP goals have parents who are involved. | 1.0                    |

*Index of Item-Objective Congruence*

Subset Scale: How do teachers perceive parental involvement specific to assessment outcomes for students with educational disabilities?

| <u>Survey Item</u>  | <u>Results Average</u> |
|---|------------------------|
| To what degree does parental involvement impact formative and summative assessment outcomes (i.e., teacher-generated assessments, districts assessments, state assessments) for students with educational disabilities? | 1.0                    |
| Parental involvement impacts assessment outcomes.   | 1.0                    |
| Parental involvement does not impact assessment outcomes.   | 1.0                    |
| Parental assistance with learning tasks helps students perform better on assessments.   | 1.0                    |
| Parental assistance with learning tasks does not help students perform better on assessments.   | .67                    |
| Parental awareness of assessment expectations (areas to be assessed, timeframes) is effective in helping students show progress.  | 1.0                    |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Parental awareness of assessment expectations (areas to be assessed, timeframes) has no impact on student growth. | 1.0 |
| Parents who help their child with homework positively impact the child's performance on assessments.              | 1.0 |

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**Pilot.** A piloted survey was administered to 11 certificated teachers in the areas of regular and special education working within a public elementary school. This elementary school was chosen given its larger enrollment of students with educational disabilities. This particular district was chosen given its enrollment totaled greater than 17,000 as well as their more diverse student populations among several elementary school buildings. Permission was obtained from leadership of the district chosen for this pilot study. The respondents responses were considered appropriate to the survey questions asked; therefore, a second sample survey was not disseminated.

The researcher calculated Cronbach's Alpha as a measure of internal consistency with the survey tool. Utilizing Cronbach's Alpha to measure the internal consistency of the survey questions was essential in ensuring that the subsets of questions were considered reliable. A reliability coefficient of .70 or higher was considered acceptable. The reliability output for these set of survey questions resulted in an acceptable coefficient of .710.

Table 2

| <i>Summary of Reliability</i> |   |                   |
|-------------------------------|---|-------------------|
| <u>Cronbach's Alpha</u>       | <u>Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items</u> | <u>N of Items</u> |
| .710                          | .771  | 17                |

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**Survey Disseminated to Teachers.** Once the content validity was determined positively influential and permission had been granted from each superintendent to request participation in this study, the surveys were readily disseminated using the electronic survey generator, questionpro.com. The researcher monitored completion of surveys daily and after 3 weeks, the researcher determined that appropriate percentage of participation was obtained in order to analyze.

### **Final Survey**

Crosstabs were elicited to begin grouping respondents' perceptions in an effort to obtain Pearson's  $r p$  correlation coefficient. Crosstabs allowed the researcher to summarize and analyze the relationships between variables within the survey disseminated. This process allowed the researcher to identify the significant values of the relationships between parent involvement and the subsequent impact on student success as it pertained to the special education referral process as well as progress made on IEP goals.

### **Summary**

Chapter Three outlined the research design and methodologies that were utilized in order to ensure this research met expectations for quality research while adhering to protocols that mandated human ethics were not violated. A panel of experts and the pilot survey confirmed the validity of the survey questions and the reliability, respectively. Participation in this research was requested across 38 school districts in the state of Missouri, ensuring diversity among students enrolled could be utilized by schools districts across the country. Six school districts approved this research with a total of 2,156 certificated teachers invited to participate.

The researcher discussed the tools and knowledge used to develop the survey and how individual questions aligned with research questions. The area of consent was also reviewed to alert readers to the adherence to university guidelines for approval before moving forward with collecting data. Selection of participants, sampling, instrumentation with validity and reliability, and time frames for disseminating approved surveys were outlined for the reader.

The researcher analyzed the relationships within the data generated from teachers certified in general and special education to determine how parental involvement impacted the special education referral process as well as progress made on IEPs.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### **Analysis**

Descriptive statistical analysis was utilized in order to dissect each category of survey questions presented to respondents. A total of 2,156 surveys were disseminated electronically across the eight elementary-level school districts that approved this research in the St. Louis region. A total of 266 participants completed the research survey, resulting in a completion percentage of 12.3%. While the completion rate did not meet the anticipated threshold the researcher had desired, the percentage of completion allowed the researcher to analyze results and provide conservative conclusions. The results of the survey were analyzed utilizing the SPSS data analyzing process in order to answer the following research question and subset research questions that sought to determine how teachers certified in the area of general and/or special education perceived the impact of parental involvement for students with educational disabilities. The research question remains:

1. How do teachers perceive the impact of parental involvement on the academic achievement and progress toward Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals, for students with educational disabilities?

In addition to the research question, there were several subset questions.

2. How do teachers perceive parental involvement and its impact during the initial special education process?
3. How do teachers perceive the impact of parental involvement on the progress a student makes specific to his/her IEP goals?

4. How do teachers perceive parental involvement specific to assessment outcomes for students with educational disabilities?
5. What are the differences in perceptions based on the type of certification held by the teacher?

### **Descriptive Statistics for Teachers Certified in Regular Education**

A total of 238 respondents identified themselves as being certified in the area of regular education. The first category of survey questions presented to respondents asked to what degree is parental involvement effective during the initial special education process important. This question sought to obtain the perception of teachers regarding how impactful parental involvement may or may not be assumed to be during the initial referral process that seeks to identify, evaluate, and program for a student with a suspicion of a disability. Respondents were asked to evaluate each survey question using a Likert scale with a continuum of possible perceptions that ranged from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The descriptive statistics were analyzed by comparing those respondents that either “disagreed” or “agreed” with each survey question presented. Additionally, Pearson’s  $r$  was also notated for each survey question that allowed the researcher to determine individual questions that met the threshold for those questions that were considered statistically significant.

Table 3 outlines the perceptions of teachers that were certified in the area of regular education for the first category of survey questions. Certified regular education teachers at the elementary level indicated with a statistical significance of .011 that parental involvement during the initial special education process was valuable for students with educational disabilities. While not considered statistically significant,

however relatively close, the same group of teachers tended to disagree that parents should not be involved during the initial special education process. These results solidified the intuitive assumption that answered the research question that sought to determine if parental involvement during the initial special education process was valuable. Teachers certified in regular education responded with an affirmative.

Table 3

*Results of Certified Regular Education Teachers*

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Survey Category: To what degree is parental involvement effective during the initial special education process (i.e., initial referral-initial evaluation-initial IEP) important?

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| <u>Survey Question</u>  | <u>Disagree</u>         | <u>Agree</u>          | <u>Pearson's <i>r</i> p value</u> |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Parents should be involved during the initial special education process.                    | <i>N</i> = 3<br>1%      | <i>N</i> = 235<br>99% | .011*                             |
| Parents should not be involved in the initial special education process.                    | <i>N</i> = 222<br>93%   | <i>N</i> = 16<br>7%   | .087                              |
| Parental involvement has no value during the initial special education process.             | <i>N</i> = 237<br>99.6% | <i>N</i> = 1<br>.4%   | .735                              |
| Parental input during the initial special education process has no impact on the process.   | <i>N</i> = 232<br>97%   | <i>N</i> = 6<br>3%    | .417                              |
| Parental involvement has value during the initial special education process.                | <i>N</i> = 8<br>3%      | <i>N</i> = 230<br>97% | .156                              |
| Parental involvement during the initial special education process impacts outcomes.         | <i>N</i> = 20<br>8%     | <i>N</i> = 218<br>92% | .680                              |
| Parental involvement during the initial special education process does not impact outcomes. | <i>N</i> = 228<br>96%   | <i>N</i> = 10<br>4%   | .132                              |

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The second survey category sought to determine, “To what degree does parental involvement affect student progress on Individualized Education Program goals?” Table 4 outlines the perceptions of teachers certified in the area of regular education as they pertained to how impactful parental involvement is regarding the progress students with educational disabilities make on their IEP goals. There were a total of eight survey

questions asked within this category; however, there was only one question that was considered statistically significant with a value of .038. Teachers certified in regular education disagreed with 82% that “IEP goal progress is not reflective of parental involvement.” Analyzing this data assisted the researcher in answering the research question, “How do teachers perceive the impact of parental involvement on the progress a student makes specific to his/her IEP goals?” While there were no other responses to these survey questions that met the threshold of statistical significance, it is valuable to report the percentages within this group of teachers whom either agreed or disagreed with large difference or even reporting those percentages that align more closely. For instance, certified regular education teachers responded with a 92% to 8% agree-disagree ratio that parental involvement does impact IEP progress, however the same group was in less agreement when asked if IEP goal progress was reflective of parental involvement, with a rate of 70% agree to 30% disagree.

Table 4

*Results of Certified Regular Education Teachers*

| Survey Category: To what degree does parental involvement affect student progress on IEP goals? |                  |                |                            |
|---|------------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| <u>Survey Question</u>  | <u>Disagree</u>  | <u>Agree</u>   | <u>Pearson's r p value</u> |
| Parental involvement does not impact student progress on the IEP goals.                         | N = 230<br>97%   | N = 8<br>3%    | .634                       |
| Parental involvement does impact student progress on IEP goals.                                 | N = 20<br>8%     | N = 218<br>92% | .539                       |
| Parents should be aware of their child's IEP goals.   | N = 2<br>1%      | N = 236<br>99% | .301                       |
| Parents should not be aware of their child's IEP goals.   | N = 237<br>99.6% | N = 1<br>.04%  | .915                       |
| IEP goal progress for students is reflective of parental involvement.                           | N = 72<br>30%    | N = 166<br>70% | .899                       |
| IEP goal progress for students is not reflective of parental involvement.                       | N = 196<br>82%   | N = 42<br>18%  | .038*                      |

|   |                |               |      |
|---|----------------|---------------|------|
| Students make progress toward their IEP goals because their parents are involved.           | N = 172<br>72% | N = 66<br>28% | .812 |
| Students who do not make progress on their IEP goals do not have parents that are involved. | N = 206<br>87% | N = 32<br>13% | .987 |

The third category of survey questions presented to teachers certified in regular education sought to identify, “To what degree does parental involvement impact formative and summative assessment outcomes (i.e., teacher-generated assessments, district assessments, state assessments) for students with educational disabilities?” There were no questions within this category of questions that met the threshold of statistical significance. Throughout this section of survey questions, this group of teachers generally reported percentages with large differences that maintained consistency across their perception that parental involvement impacts assessment outcomes (83% agree to 17% disagree ratio). Additionally, teachers agreed with a rate above 90% that parental assistance with learning tasks, parental awareness of assessment expectations, and parental assistance with homework each lend themselves to positively impact student performance on assessments.

Table 5

*Results of Certified Regular Education Teachers*

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Category: To what degree does parental involvement impact formative and summative assessment outcomes (i.e., teacher generated assessments, districts assessments, state assessments) for students with educational disabilities?

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| <u>Survey Question</u>                                    | <u>Disagree</u> | <u>Agree</u>   | <u>Pearson's r<br/>p value</u> |
|---|-----------------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| Parental involvement impacts assessment outcomes.         | N = 40<br>17%   | N = 198<br>83% | .180                           |
| Parental involvement does not impact assessment outcomes. | N = 200<br>84%  | N = 38<br>16%  | .746                           |

|  |                  |                  |      |
|--|------------------|------------------|------|
| Parental assistance with learning tasks helps students perform better on assessments.  | $N = 12$<br>5%   | $N = 226$<br>95% | .375 |
| Parental assistance with learning tasks does not help students perform better on assessments.                                    | $N = 226$<br>95% | $N = 12$<br>5%   | .372 |
| Parental awareness of assessment expectations (areas to be assessed, timeframes) is effective in helping students show progress. | $N = 20$<br>8%   | $N = 218$<br>92% | .906 |
| Parental awareness of assessment expectations (areas to be assessed, timeframes) has no impact on student growth.                | $N = 223$<br>94% | $N = 15$<br>6%   | .899 |
| Parents who help their child with homework positively impacts the child's performance on assessments.                            | $N = 11$<br>5%   | $N = 227$<br>95% | .458 |

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### **Descriptive Statistics for Teachers Certified in Special Education**

A total of 146 of the 266 respondents identified themselves as certified in the area of special education. The first category of survey questions presented to respondents asked to what degree is parental involvement effective during the initial special education process important. This question sought to obtain the perception of teachers regarding how impactful parental involvement may or may not assume to be during the initial referral process that seeks to identify, evaluate, and program for a student with a suspicion of a disability. Respondents were asked to evaluate each survey question using a Likert scale with a continuum of possible perceptions that ranged from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The descriptive statistics were analyzed by comparing those respondents that either “disagreed” or “agreed” with each survey question presented. Additionally, Pearson’s  $r$  was also notated for each survey question, which that allowed the researcher to determine individual questions that met the threshold for those questions that were considered statistically significant.

Table 6 outlines the perceptions of teachers that were certified in the area of special education for the first category of survey questions. Certified special education teachers at the elementary level indicated with a statistical significance of .000 for five of the seven questions presented. Statistically significant values of .006 and .001 were also captured for the remaining two survey questions in this category. The results for this category of survey questions for teachers certified in special education compared to those certified in regular education were in sharp contrast. Teachers certified in regular education and those certified in special education aligned with statistically significant values of .011 and .000, respectively, when asked if parents should be involved during the initial special education process. In contrast to teachers certified in regular education, the perception of teachers certified in special education consistently resulted in statistically significant findings for each question presented.

Table 6

*Results of Special Education Teachers*

Category: To what degree is parental involvement effective during the initial special education process (i.e. initial referral-initial evaluation-initial IEP) important?

| <u>Survey Question</u>  | <u>Disagree</u>  | <u>Agree</u>     | <u>Pearson's <math>r</math><br/>p value</u> |
|---|------------------|------------------|---|
| Parents should be involved during the initial special education process.                  | $N = 3$<br>2%    | $N = 143$<br>98% | .000*                                       |
| Parents should not be involved in the initial special education process.                  | $N = 132$<br>90% | $N = 14$<br>10%  | .000*                                       |
| Parental involvement has no value during the initial special education process.           | $N = 145$<br>99% | $N = 1$<br>1%    | .000*                                       |
| Parental input during the initial special education process has no impact on the process. | $N = 141$<br>97% | $N = 5$<br>3%    | .000*                                       |
| Parental involvement has value during the initial special education process.              | $N = 5$<br>3%    | $N = 141$<br>97% | .000*                                       |
| Parental involvement during the initial special education process impacts outcomes.       | $N = 11$<br>8%   | $N = 135$<br>92% | .006*                                       |

|   |                |             |       |
|---|----------------|-------------|-------|
| Parental involvement during the initial special education process does not impact outcomes. | N = 142<br>97% | N = 4<br>3% | .001* |
|---|----------------|-------------|-------|

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The second survey category sought to determine, “To what degree does parental involvement affect student progress on Individualized Education Program goals?” Table 7 outlines the perceptions of teachers certified in the area of special education as they pertained to how impactful parental involvement is regarding the progress students with educational disabilities make on their IEP goals. There were a total of eight survey questions asked within this category; however, there was only one question that was considered statistically significant with a value of .032. Teachers certified in special education disagreed with 97% that “parental involvement does not impact student progress on IEP goals.” Within this section of survey questions, this group of teachers generally reported percentages with large differences that maintained consistency across their perception that parental involvement impacted student progress on IEP goals (90% agree to 10% disagree ratio). In contrast, some teachers’ responses were less closely aligned when discussing if IEP goal progress was reflective of parental involvement (69% agree to 31% disagree) or that students make progress toward their IEP goals because their parents are involved (77% agree to 23% disagree ratio).

Table 7

*Certified Special Education Teachers*

Survey Category: To what degree does parental involvement affect student progress on IEP goals?

| <u>Survey Question</u>  | <u>Disagree</u> | <u>Agree</u>   | <u>Pearson’s r<br/>p value</u> |
|---|-----------------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| Parental involvement does not impact student progress on the IEP goals. | N = 142<br>97%  | N = 4<br>3%    | .032*                          |
| Parental involvement does impact student progress on IEP goals.         | N = 14<br>10%   | N = 132<br>90% | .095                           |

|   |                       |                       |      |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|------|
| Parents should be aware of their child's IEP goals.   | <i>N</i> = 2<br>1%    | <i>N</i> = 144<br>99% | .430 |
| Parents should not be aware of their child's IEP goals.                                     | <i>N</i> = 145<br>99% | <i>N</i> = 1<br>1%    | .556 |
| IEP goal progress for students is reflective of parental involvement.                       | <i>N</i> = 45<br>31%  | <i>N</i> = 101<br>69% | .635 |
| IEP goal progress for students is not reflective of parental involvement.                   | <i>N</i> = 124<br>85% | <i>N</i> = 22<br>15%  | .153 |
| Students make progress toward their IEP goals because their parents are involved.           | <i>N</i> = 34<br>23%  | <i>N</i> = 112<br>77% | .180 |
| Students who do not make progress on their IEP goals do not have parents that are involved. | <i>N</i> = 129<br>88% | <i>N</i> = 17<br>12%  | .609 |

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The third category of survey questions presented to teachers certified in special education sought to identify, “To what degree does parental involvement impact formative and summative assessment outcomes (i.e., teacher-generated assessments, district assessments, state assessments) for students with educational disabilities?” Teachers certified in special education responded similarly to teachers certified in regular education for this survey category (see Table 8). This group of teachers generally reported percentages with large differences that maintained consistency across their perception that parental involvement impacts assessment outcomes (89% agree to 11% disagree ratio). Additionally, teachers agreed with a rate above 90% that parental assistance with learning tasks, parental awareness of assessment expectations, and parental assistance with homework each lend themselves to positively impact student performance on assessments.

Table 8

*Certified Special Education Teachers*

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Survey Category: To what degree does parental involvement impact formative and summative assessment outcomes (i.e. teacher generated assessments, districts assessments, state assessments) for students with educational disabilities?

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| <u>Survey Question</u>   | <u>Disagree</u>       | <u>Agree</u>          | <u>Pearson's r</u><br><u>p value</u> |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Parental involvement impacts assessment outcomes.  | <i>N</i> = 16<br>11%  | <i>N</i> = 130<br>89% | .083                                 |
| Parental involvement does not impact assessment outcomes.  | <i>N</i> = 129<br>88% | <i>N</i> = 17<br>12%  | .164                                 |
| Parental assistance with learning tasks helps students perform better on assessments.  | <i>N</i> = 5<br>3%    | <i>N</i> = 141<br>97% | .202                                 |
| Parental assistance with learning tasks does not help students perform better on assessments.                                    | <i>N</i> = 141<br>97% | <i>N</i> = 5<br>3%    | .192                                 |
| Parental awareness of assessment expectations (areas to be assessed, timeframes) is effective in helping students show progress. | <i>N</i> = 13<br>9%   | <i>N</i> = 133<br>91% | .618                                 |
| Parental awareness of assessment expectations (areas to be assessed, timeframes) has no impact on student growth.                | <i>N</i> = 136<br>93% | <i>N</i> = 10<br>7%   | .913                                 |
| Parents who help their child with homework positively impacts the child's performance on assessments.                            | <i>N</i> = 5<br>3%    | <i>N</i> = 141<br>97% | .078                                 |

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**Descriptive Statistics for Teachers Certified in Regular and Special Education**

A total of 138 of the 266 respondents identified themselves as certified in the areas of regular education and special education. The first category of survey questions presented to respondents asked, "To what degree is parental involvement effective during the initial special education process important?" This question sought to obtain the perception of teachers regarding how impactful parental involvement may or may not be assumed to be during the initial referral process that seeks to identify, evaluate, and program for a student with a suspicion of a disability. Respondents were asked to

evaluate each survey question using a Likert scale with a continuum of possible perceptions that ranged from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The descriptive statistics were analyzed by comparing those respondents that either “disagreed” or “agreed” with each survey question presented. Additionally, Pearson’s *r* value was also notated for each survey question that allowed the researcher to determine individual questions that met the threshold for those questions that were considered statistically significant.

Table 9 outlines the perceptions of teachers that were certified in both regular education and special education for the first category of survey questions. This group of certified teachers at the elementary level indicated with a statistical significance according to Pearson’s *r* for every survey question presented. Teachers that were dually certified reported similar results as the teacher group that was only certified in special education. For example, 99% of teachers in both of these groups disagreed that parental involvement during the initial special education process had no impact on the process (.004 and .000 values). One specific survey question, “Parents should be involved during the initial special education process,” resulted in a shared statistical finding between teachers certified in regular education, those certified in special education, and those teachers certified in both regular and special education. All three subgroups reported a statistical value of .000.

Table 9

*Certified Teachers in Regular and Special Education*

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Survey Category: To what degree is parental involvement effective during the initial special education process (i.e., initial referral-initial evaluation-initial IEP) important?

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| <u>Survey Question</u>  | <u>Disagree</u> | <u>Agree</u>   | <u>Pearson's r p value</u> |
|---|-----------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| Parents should be involved during the initial special education process                     | N = 3           | N = 135        | .000*                      |
| Parents should not be involved in the initial special education process                     | N = 130<br>94%  | N = 8<br>6%    | .000*                      |
| Parental involvement has no value during the initial special education process.             | N = 138<br>100% | N = 0<br>0%    | .000*                      |
| Parental input during the initial special education process has no impact on the process.   | N = 136<br>99%  | N = 2<br>1%    | .004*                      |
| Parental involvement has value during the initial special education process.                | N = 6<br>4%     | N = 132<br>95% | .001*                      |
| Parental involvement during the initial special education process impacts outcomes.         | N = 14<br>10%   | N = 124<br>90% | .011*                      |
| Parental involvement during the initial special education process does not impact outcomes. | N = 131<br>95%  | N = 7<br>5%    | .002*                      |

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The second survey category sought to determine, “To what degree does parental involvement affect student progress on Individualized Education Program goals?” Table 10 outlines the perceptions of teachers certified in both areas of regular education and special education as they pertained to how impactful parental involvement was regarding the progress students with educational disabilities made on their IEP goals. Two survey questions met the threshold for statistically significant findings with values of .016 for the survey question, “Parental involvement does impact student progress on IEP goals” and .019 for “IEP goal progress for students is not reflective of parental involvement.” These findings were in contrast to the outcomes analyzed for the teachers within their individual certification groups. There were no statistically significant findings for this survey

category for teachers certified in regular education and the teacher group with certification in special education revealed one statistically significant finding with the first survey question, “Parental involvement does not impact student progress on the IEP goals.”

Table 10

*Certified Teachers in Regular Education and Special Education*

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Survey Category: To what degree does parental involvement effect student progress on IEP goals?

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| <u>Survey Question</u>  | <u>Disagree</u>        | <u>Agree</u>          | <u>Pearson's r<br/>p value</u> |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Parental involvement does not impact student progress on the IEP goals.                     | <i>N</i> = 133<br>96%  | <i>N</i> = 5<br>4%    | .115                           |
| Parental involvement does impact student progress on IEP goals.                             | <i>N</i> = 10<br>7%    | <i>N</i> = 128<br>93% | .016*                          |
| Parents should be aware of their child's IEP goals.   | <i>N</i> = 1<br>1%     | <i>N</i> = 137<br>99% | .973                           |
| Parents should not be aware of their child's IEP goals.                                     | <i>N</i> = 138<br>100% | <i>N</i> = 0<br>0%    | .579                           |
| IEP goal progress for students is reflective of parental involvement.                       | <i>N</i> = 45<br>33%   | <i>N</i> = 93<br>67%  | .334                           |
| IEP goal progress for students is not reflective of parental involvement.                   | <i>N</i> = 108<br>78%  | <i>N</i> = 30<br>22%  | .019*                          |
| Students make progress toward their IEP goals because their parents are involved.           | <i>N</i> = 44<br>32%   | <i>N</i> = 94<br>68%  | .128                           |
| Students who do not make progress on their IEP goals do not have parents that are involved. | <i>N</i> = 116<br>84%  | <i>N</i> = 22<br>16%  | .281                           |

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The third category of survey questions presented to teachers certified in both regular education and special education sought to identify, “To what degree does parental involvement impact formative a summative assessment outcomes (i.e., teacher-generated assessments, district assessments, state assessments) for students with educational disabilities?” In contrast to the findings revealed from individual teacher certification

groups, this dually certified teacher group revealed one survey question with statistically significant results with a value of .043. The question identified as statistically significant asked, “Parental assistance with learning tasks helps students perform better on assessments.”

Table 11

*Certified Teachers in Regular Education and Special Education*

Survey Category: To what degree does parental involvement impact formative and summative assessment outcomes (i.e., teacher-generated assessments, districts assessments, state assessments) for students with educational disabilities?

| <u>Survey Question</u>   | <u>Disagree</u>        | <u>Agree</u>          | <u>Pearson's r<br/>p value</u> |
|--|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Parental involvement impacts assessment outcomes.  | <i>N</i> = 26<br>19%   | <i>N</i> = 112<br>81% | .265                           |
| Parental involvement does not impact assessment outcomes.  | <i>N</i> = 113<br>82%  | <i>N</i> = 25<br>18%  | .227                           |
| Parental assistance with learning tasks helps students perform better on assessments.  | <i>N</i> = 7<br>5%     | <i>N</i> = 131<br>95% | .043*                          |
| Parental assistance with learning tasks does not help students perform better on assessments.                                    | <i>N</i> = 131<br>95%q | <i>N</i> = 7<br>5%    | .057                           |
| Parental awareness of assessment expectations (areas to be assessed, timeframes) is effective in helping students show progress. | <i>N</i> = 9<br>7%     | <i>N</i> = 129<br>93% | .450                           |
| Parental awareness of assessment expectations (areas to be assessed, timeframes) has no impact on student growth.                | <i>N</i> = 131<br>95%  | <i>N</i> = 7<br>5%    | .520                           |
| Parents who help their child with homework positively impacts the child's performance on assessments.                            | <i>N</i> = 9<br>7%     | <i>N</i> = 129<br>93% | .249                           |

## Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Findings

Table 12

*Demographic Summary of Respondents*

| <u>Gender</u> | <u>Age</u> | <u>Years of Experience</u> |
|---------------|------------|----------------------------|
| M=10          | 22-32=76   | 0-10=105                   |
| F=256         | 22-32=76   | 11-21=113                  |
|               | 44-54=63   |                            |
|               | 55-65=33   |                            |

Table 12 outlines the demographic information obtained from respondents. When analyzing the years of teaching experience, there were no survey questions for any survey category that reached the threshold for statistical significance; however, there was one survey question, “IEP goal progress for students is reflective of parental involvement,” that was just beyond the statistical threshold with a value of .059. When analyzing the responses to survey questions according to age, there were two survey questions that revealed statistically significant findings. The survey questions, “Parents should be aware of their child’s IEP goals” and “Parents should not be aware of their child’s IEP goals” resulted in values of .043 and .017, respectively. When analyzing responses according to gender, there were four survey questions that resulted in statistically significant findings. The survey questions included, “Parents should not be involved in the initial special education process” (.000), “Parental involvement has no value during the initial special education process” (.000), “Parental involvement has value during the initial special education process” (.041), and “Parental awareness of assessment expectations has no impact on student growth” (.007).

## **Research Questions**

The individual survey questions disseminated and the subsequent responses from teachers certificated in regular and special education provided sufficient data to answer the research questions. The overarching research question sought to discover how teachers perceived the impact of parental involvement on the academic achievement and progress toward goals, located within the Individualized Education Program, for students with educational disabilities. That research question was further delineated into how teachers perceived the impact of parental involvement during the initial special education process, on the progress a student makes within his/her Individualized Education Program, and assessment outcomes for students with educational disabilities.

Additionally, the researcher sought to determine if the type of certification held impacted perceptions throughout these categories. The three groups of certification levels consist of those teachers certificated in regular education only, special education only, or those dually certificated in both areas.

The first category sought to determine the perceptions that certificated teachers had regarding the impact of parental involvement during the initial special education process. The results of the survey revealed that teachers certificated in regular education, special education, and with dual certifications agreed with statistical significance that parents should be involved during the initial special education process. The discrepancy was evident between teachers with individual regular education certification compared to those with individual special education certification and those teachers that were dually certificated also perceived, with statistical significance, that, parental involvement during this process has value and impacts outcomes.

The second category sought to discover the perceptions that certificated teachers had regarding the impact of parental involvement on the progress that a student makes on his/her IEP goals. The data revealed less agreement between subgroups when dissecting perceptions for this category. Teachers certified in regular education and teachers dually certified reported disagreement that IEP goal progress for students is not reflective of parental involvement resulting in a statistically significant outcome. In contrast, teachers who were singularly certified in special education did not respond similarly for the same question. Teachers dually certified and those who held only certifications in special education revealed similar perceptions that parental involvement does impact the progress a student makes on their IEP.

The final category of survey questions sought to discover the perceptions of teachers with regard to the impact of parental involvement on assessment outcomes for students with educational disabilities. This category offered the least comparable data between teachers certified in regular education and those certified in special education. Neither of these subgroups revealed statistically significant findings as they related to teachers perceiving parental involvement to impact assessment outcomes. In contrast, statistically significant findings were revealed for the subgroup of teachers with dual certifications in regular and special education. This subgroup revealed statistically significant outcomes related to parental assistance with learning tasks helping students perform better on assessments.

## **Summary**

Chapter Four discussed the total number of participants who completed the electronic survey seeking to discover the perceptions of teachers certificated in regular

and special education, as well as those that had dual certification, had regarding the impact of parental involvement on the academic achievement and progress toward goals, located within the Individualized Education Program, for students with educational disabilities. The survey questions were separated into three categories in order to analyze perceptions between subgroups more succinctly as well as to draw conclusions. This study was completed to determine the perceptions of impact on the achievement of students with educational disabilities.

A total of 266 teachers completed the survey across the six school districts that approved this research. The use of SPSS data analysis software allowed the researcher to utilize descriptive statistics to identify data trends as well as make comparisons based upon statistically significant findings across all three categories and subgroups. Significant Pearson's  $r$  findings were identified for teachers who were certified in general education and special education; however, similarities and differences were observed between types of certifications.

When analyzing the area of teacher perceptions as they pertained to parental involvement during the initial special education referral process, teachers certified in general education and those in special education agreed that parents should be involved in this process; however, teachers certified in special education also perceived parental involvement to have value and impact outcomes for this process. The next category of survey questions analyzed how teachers perceived parental involvement to impact IEP goal progress for students with educational disabilities. These teacher subgroups revealed differences in perceptions. Teachers certified in general education stated with a significant Pearson's  $r$  that IEP goal progress for students is not reflective of parental

involvement; however, teachers certified in special education noted significance for the survey question that parental involvement does not impact student progress on IEP goals. For the last category of survey questions, neither subgroup of teacher certification elicited significant findings according to Pearson's *r*. In Chapter Five the researcher summarizes the methods used to conduct this research, discusses the implications of the results of the study, and makes recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Introduction**

This research focused on identifying perceptions of teachers certified in regular and/or special education as they related to the impact of parental involvement on the processes, progress, and academic achievement for students with education disabilities. The foundation for this research stemmed from one notable theorist, Epstein, who concluded that parent involvement that intertwines practices in the home, at school, and within the community “shape the children’s learning and development” (as cited by Smith, Wohlstetter, Kuzin, & De Pedro, 2011, p. 89). Epstein (1995) identified six types of involvement that will enhance the relationship between the school community and families to better support the academic and social success of students (Purnell, 2000). The six types of parental involvement that Epstein (1995) identified that foster relationships between school communities and families in order to increase student success include: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with community.

Epstein’s (1995) framework for parental involvement research and programming extends across the country and reaches a wide array of rural and urban populations yet does not offer deep insights for those students with educational disabilities. Parents of students with disabilities are compounded with emotions regarding the health and well-being of their child while being expected to navigate a system of criteria specific laws that, again, identifies their child as atypical. “The role of parents with a child with a disability shows a level of complexity and intensity not generally found in the general

population...learning how to provide the education and supports that their children need is an ongoing and frequently frustrating process” (Collier, Keefe, & Hirrel, 2015, p. 120).

Research was necessary to support the complexities that exist for students with educational disabilities in the school environment and to determine if the perceptions of teachers across certification levels can shed insights on how parental involvement impacts student progress across the continuum of need. Teachers at the elementary school level certified in regular and/or special education were given surveys that sought to identify perceptions as they pertained to how parental involvement impacts students with education disabilities during the special education referral process, or the progress made on their IEPs, or the impact perceived on assessment outcomes. These outcomes were analyzed according to relationships between the perceptions of the subgroups of teachers, based upon certification type and demographics, as they related to the various components of the identification and programming process, as well as the assessment outcomes for students with educational deficits to determine if they perceived parental involvement to influence outcomes. These results can help school leaders make more informed decisions regarding parental involvement programs and initiatives in an effort to support learners with educational disabilities.

### **Research Question**

1. How do teachers perceive the impact of parental involvement on the academic achievement and progress toward Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals, for students with educational disabilities?

In addition to the research question, there were several subset questions.

2. How do teachers perceive parental involvement and its impact during the initial special education process?
3. How do teachers perceive the impact of parental involvement on the progress a student makes specific to his/her IEP goals?
4. How do teachers perceive parental involvement specific to assessment outcomes for students with educational disabilities?
5. What are the differences in perceptions based on the type of certification held by the teacher?

### **Summary of Methods**

Quantitative research was completed using an electronic survey that was created by the researcher and analyzed using Rovinelli and Hambleton's (1977) Index of Item-Objective Congruence. The outcome confirmed the validity for the content of the research thus leading to the utilization of the pilot process to determine the reliability of the survey questions. The pilot survey was disseminated to 11 certificated regular and/or special education teachers in a large St. Louis County school. Utilizing Cronbach's Alpha to measure the internal consistency of the survey questions resulted in a reliability output with an acceptable coefficient of .710. Six of the 38 school districts approved this research, which resulted in a total of 2,156 surveys disseminated to teachers certificated in the areas of regular and/or special education at the elementary level. A total of 266 participants completed the research survey, resulting in a completion percentage of 12.3%. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze and compare the results among subgroups. As noted earlier, the desired threshold for completion was not obtained, therefore, conservative conclusions should be taken cautiously.

## **Summary of Findings**

Research Question 1: How do teachers perceive the impact of parental involvement on the academic achievement and progress toward Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals, for students with educational disabilities?\_The certification level of a teacher at the elementary level plays a significant role in how they perceive parental involvement. Teachers that were certified in the area of special education consistently perceive parental involvement to have a greater impact on the initial special education referral process and progress specific to the IEPs for students with educational disabilities compared to teachers certified in regular education. Additional research questions were presented to outline three categories specific to special education and the involvement of parents based upon teacher perceptions. The data were analyzed to ascertain why some relationships exist between certification levels of teachers as they relate to parental involvement as well as to identify the probable reasons for disagreement. The survey category of questions presented dissected parental involvement from the initial special education referral process, the IEP programming process, and the impact on assessments in an effort to gauge teacher perceptions. Discussions specific to the relationships or disagreements are outlined below according to survey categories.

Subset research question 2: How do teachers perceive parental involvement and its impact during the initial special education process? The results for this category of survey questions for teachers certified in special education compared to those certified in regular education were sharp in contrast. A strong relationship was identified between teachers certified in special education and how they perceived parental involvement as positively impacting the initial special education process for students with educational

disabilities. While teachers certified in regular education did report with statistical significance that parents should be involved in the initial referral process only those teachers certified in special education or dually certified perceived parental involvement during this process as providing value, equating parental input with impact, as well as impacting overall outcomes for this initial referral process.

These outcomes lend themselves for further investigation. The initial special education referral process is an arduous endeavor for parents and educators alike who have identified concerns for an individual student at the elementary level. Referrals for special education evaluations may be initiated by the parent or the school agency; however, in order for a student to be formally evaluated for an educational disability, a parent of an elementary student must sign written consent as part of this process. Special education teachers are effectively the experts for the initial special education process within a school building, compared to general education teachers, and most likely better comprehend how valuable and necessary it is for a parent to be involved throughout. Given their knowledge of the initial special education referral process, special education teachers are aware of the numerous components of the process and the information that will be gathered from parents and teachers in order to ascertain if formal assessments are warranted to determine eligibility for an educational disability. When the parents participate in the process they are able to share their concerns regarding their child's academic strengths and challenges as well as learn how their child's performance may or may not be impeding academic success from the perspective of the school. These discussions between school and parents throughout the referral process are necessary in order to support the parent's ability to make decisions as to whether or not they will give

permission for their child to be formally evaluated for an educational disability, if warranted. Therefore, those teachers certified in special education presented with more consistent and statistically significant findings for this category of survey questions as a result of their background knowledge regarding the initial referral process and how the lack of parental involvement, specifically their need to sign written consent for assessment, would stop the assessment process altogether.

In order to make more definitive comparisons between the certification levels as they pertained to their perceptions of parental involvement for the initial special education referral process, additional qualitative questions could have provided additional insights into *why* teachers certified in regular education did not perceive, with statistical significance, parental involvement as valuable or to impact outcomes similarly to teachers certified in special education or dually certified. Similar qualitative survey questions could have also delved into *why* teachers certified in special education view parental involvement to be statistically significant throughout this category.

Subset research question 3: How do teachers perceive the impact of parental involvement on the progress a student makes specific to his/her IEP goals? Teachers that are singularly certified in special education or dually certified in both regular and special education perceived parental involvement to impact progress on IEP goal with statistical significance. Within this section of survey questions, teachers certified in special education reported percentages with large differences that maintained consistency across their perception that parental involvement impacts student progress on IEP goals (90% agree to 10% disagree ratio). Teachers certified in regular education revealed percentages that were similar to those certified in special education with a 92% agree to 8% disagree

ratio. When discussing if IEP goal progress was reflective of parental involvement these two subgroups' response ratios, although with more variety between agree and disagree, aligned to one another. Teachers certified in regular education responded with 70% agree to 30% disagree compared to 69% agree to 31% disagree for teachers certified in special education.

A sharp contrast was revealed when analyzing the teacher group differences specific to the survey question that students make progress toward their IEP goals because their parents are involved. Teachers certified in regular education agreed with only 28%, compared to 77% for teachers certified in special education. These outcomes offer insights that may suggest that all subgroups of teachers perceive parental involvement to impact a student's success specific to goals addressed as part of the IEP; however, student success is not solely reflective parental involvement. It is plausible to infer that students can be successful in the absence of quality parental involvement, especially from the perspective of the regular education teacher. When quality instruction paired with quality intervention systems are evident and provided consistently in a regular education classroom by the regular education teacher, it is plausible that a student can make consistent progress toward classroom and IEP goals with or without direct parent involvement.

In contrast, special education teachers conveyed that they perceived parental involvement to not only impact IEP progress but also that the progress a student makes is reflective of parental involvement. This difference in perception compared to teachers certified in regular education may be a result of the special education teachers' awareness of the specific goals developed at the IEP meeting and the level of supports the team

determined was required in order for a student to make progress or meet their goals within a year in order to access the learning environment. Given their level of expertise in designing and implementing IEP goals, their awareness of how important parent buy-in is as well as how parents participated at the IEP meeting, special education teachers most likely viewed parental involvement as an additional valuable predictor.

Additionally, special education teachers were aware that IEP goals are embedded with a variety of accommodations and modifications in order to meet the individual needs of a student in the educational environment, and likely viewed parental involvement as an additional valuable predictor, in collaboration with regular education teachers, in the progress a student will make on his/her IEP goals. Teachers certified in special education may perceive that addressing an educational disability through interventions requires support from each component of a student's school and home community, thus the difference between these subgroups on the notion that IEP goal progress is reflective of parental involvement. Qualitative questions for this category of survey questions would further outline the reasons *why* teachers perceived IEP goal progress to be reflective of parental involvement or not.

Subset research question 4: How do teachers perceive parental involvement specific to assessment outcomes for students with educational disabilities? Teachers that were dually certified in regular and special education were the only subgroup that resulted in a statistically significant finding for one survey question within this category. This group perceived that parental assistance with learning tasks helps students perform better in assessments. Dually certified teachers had the unique perspective and knowledge of instruction in both learning environments. It is plausible that background

knowledge leads to the awareness of the important role that parental involvement plays when assists students in preparing for assessments.

When analyzing how teachers perceived parental involvement and the impact on assessment outcomes, all subgroups of teachers generally reported percentages with large differences that maintained consistency across their perception that parental involvement impacts assessment outcomes. Teachers certified in regular education reported 83% agree to 80% of teachers certified in special education and 81% for dually certified teachers that parental involvement impacted assessment outcomes. Additionally, all subgroups of teachers agreed that parental assistance with learning tasks, parental awareness of assessment expectations, and parental assistance with homework each lend themselves to positively impact student performance on assessments; however, statistically significant findings were not obtained. These perceptions reveal future research is necessary in order to more deeply understand how the relationship between certified teachers and parents impacts assessment outcomes for students with educational disabilities. Future research may consider focusing on a mixed methods approach to this category of parental involvement and assessment outcomes. Looking at assessment data specific to assessments administered for students with educational disabilities in addition to survey question data might assist in drawing more definitive conclusions as they pertained to how parental involvement impacts assessment outcomes. Additionally, tapping into the awareness of parents as it pertains to the assessments their child will participate in, the assessment expectations, how teachers convey assessment expectations, the meaning behind assessment outcomes, and how those outcomes influence classroom instruction is valuable for future research. It is also valuable to learn how school communities prepare

or assist parents in supporting their children at home in preparation for assessments. These additional research steps would provide more robust research outcomes for making relationship-based conclusions.

Subset research question 5: Are there differences in perceptions based on the type of certification held by the teacher? The overall findings of this research study suggest that the certification type held by a teacher does have an impact on the perception of parental involvement on the academic achievement and progress related to IEP goals for students with educational disabilities. Results indicate that teachers certified in special education, and more so, teachers dually certified in both regular education and special education perceived parental involvement to have a more significant impact on academic achievement and IEP progress outcomes.

### **Implications**

The implications of this research are specific to the categories of survey questions presented to teachers. In an effort to determine how teachers certified in regular and/or special education perceived the impact of parental involvement on the academic achievement and IEP progress, the participants were asked to rate how they perceived parental involvement during the initial special education process, according to IEP progress, as well as how they related to assessment outcomes for students with educational disabilities. The outcomes of this research have identified gaps specific to differences between subgroups that could lend themselves to future research. Identifying additional components of teacher certification as they related to the current assignment would allow the researcher to make stronger comparisons between groups with single certification and those with dual certifications.

The results from the first category of research survey questions demonstrated a clear difference between teachers with special education certification and those with regular education certification only. The findings from this study suggest that teachers certified in special education or dually certified responded that they perceived parents should be involved during the initial special education process. This same subgroup also perceived parental involvement to have value, impact outcomes, and that parent input is impactful. The difference between subgroups may be a result of those teachers with special education certification having a greater understanding and appreciation of the intricacies of the initial special education process as it relates to how parental participation and input can help or hinder the completion of the process. Knowing that the lack of parental involvement can halt this process resulting in a student not being assessed for special education may contribute to how this subgroup of teachers perceived parental involvement and the subsequent value and impact. Additionally, those teachers that were dually certified held similar outcomes as those teachers that were only certified in special education. This similarity may be attributed to the current assignment for these teachers. While they held certification in regular education, it is likely that they were currently assigned as a special education teacher or had been previously. Future research may include specifying the assignment of certified teachers as an additional demographic identifier to further detail perceptions as they relate to how teachers are assigned within the public school setting.

The second category of research survey questions delved into the perceptions teachers held regarding the impact of parental involvement on the progress a student with an educational disability achieves on their Individualized Education Program. The

findings of this study suggest that teachers that are singularly certified in special education and dually certified in regular and special education perceived parental involvement as impactful for progress on a student's IEP with statistical significance. Similar rationales outlined in the first category are possible contributors to these results as well. Teachers that are certified in special education have an acquired knowledge of writing IEP goals, implementing strategies to support IEP goal progress, and maintaining a level of communication with parents through annual IEP meetings and progress updates throughout the year that lend themselves to their perception that parental involvement impacts goal progress. This subgroup of teachers was likely aware that carryover of strategies across home and school environments positively impacts IEP goal progress. Teachers certified in regular education may not have similar knowledge of the development and design of IEP goals or awareness of strategies utilized by special education teachers to support individual learners. The relationship between special education and regular education teachers, as it relates to the needs of individual students with IEPs across learning environment, is essential to supporting learners. The awareness, comfort level, and knowledge of IEP goals and strategies may have influenced how teachers certified in regular education perceived the impact of the parental involvement regarding IEP goal progress. Future research may need to address the awareness and knowledge level of regular education teachers as they pertain to the IEP process in an effort to further understand their perceptions of parental involvement for this area of interest.

The third category sought to understand the perceptions of teachers regarding parental involvement and assessment outcomes. The findings of this study suggest that

teachers dually certified perceived parental assistance with learning tasks to help students perform better on assessments. The other subgroups of certified teachers did not reveal statistical findings for this category. This difference between subgroups may be a result of the knowledge that dually certified teachers have of both regular and special education environments. These teachers may have the combined awareness of teacher-made or state-mandated assessments in the regular education environment as well as the awareness of how parental involvement can impact performance for students with educational disabilities from their experiences in the special education environment, resulting in these perception outcomes. Future research may consider addressing the relationship between regular education teachers and special education for students they share. If the collaborative nature of teachers that are singularly certified in regular education or special education could be captured then research could assess how their collaboration influences perceptions of parental involvement influence on assessment outcomes.

### **Limitations**

Limitations to this research may have impacted the overall outcomes from the survey questions presented. The research was primarily based on the theoretical framework of Epstein (1995) who indicated that there are six types of parental involvement that could enhance the relationships between home and school, thus positively impacting student achievement. Including additional theorists' positions on parental involvement that more specifically outlined how parental involvement impacts achievement for students with educational disabilities would increase the readers' knowledge of various perspectives. While this research sought to include approximately

38 school districts across Region 8 of Missouri, only six districts responded with approval. This limitation impacted the large diverse representation of rural and urban that was anticipated, thus impacting the overall rate of responses, as well as the ability to generalize to the total population. There was a total of 266 respondents to this survey; however, male respondents only represented 11% of that total. Perceptions from a balanced gender demographic would further support making stronger comparisons among subgroups.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This research offered outcomes specific to how teachers singularly or dually certified in regular and/or special education perceived parental involvement for students with educational disabilities. Recommendations for future research would include making adjustments to further detail subgroup demographics in order to make stronger comparisons. For example, research could identify the certification classification as well as the current assignment (i.e., special education versus regular education, grade level) to ensure that comparisons are made on factual evidence.

Additional details regarding subgroups could include the current level of awareness, knowledge, or understanding that regular education teachers hold regarding special education processes, including IEPs. It is equally as important to gather information from special education teachers to determine their level of awareness, knowledge, or understanding regarding regular education based assessments. The level of awareness, knowledge, or understanding that exists between subgroups could also be assessed through the lens of professional development. Learning about the particular trainings that teachers receive specific to their certification classification or assignment

could also assist future research in making stronger comparisons regarding parental involvement for students with educational disabilities. School districts offer unique programs specific to the school communities they serve. As a result of these differences, seeking information about the various parental involvement programs that are offered within a school district may or may not influence the experiences and knowledge that certified teachers hold as they pertain to parental involvement. Learning about the parental involvement programs embedded or absent within school districts as part of future research and how those programs may influence perception based outcomes could support making comparisons.

Another unique perspective for evaluating parental involvement for students with educational disabilities could be taken from the lens of engaging parents of students with educational disabilities or engaging students themselves. Their knowledge and experiences would offer a firsthand account of how they believe their parents' involvement influences their academic achievement and progress on IEP goals. A final recommendation would be to look at the types of parental involvement and specific parental involvement programs that are offered within the school environment and determining which programs are most beneficial to the academic success and IEP goal progress for students with educational disabilities.

### **Summary**

This chapter allowed the researcher to review and analyze the responses to each category of survey questions that sought to answer the research questions. The researcher also provided insights into the rationales surrounding the individual groups of responses and inferred how those outcomes could impact future research. The researcher also

conveyed the limitations to this research that may have unintended consequences on the data that were analyzed. Broad recommendations were offered for future research to include an increase in participation, especially amongst male teachers, to enhance learning.

While reflecting on this research specific to the three categories that were the focus of the survey questions, specific recommendations were made for future research. It may be beneficial for future research to pair quantitative survey questions with qualitative survey questions for each category in an effort to ascertain WHY certified teachers perceived parental involvement as they reported. It would also be beneficial to ascertain the current assignment of teachers that are dually certified to determine if any relationships exist between their certification type and assignment to a general education classroom or special education teacher role. Looking into the student population that certified teachers are supporting (i.e., low income) may provide more insights into how teachers perceive parental involvement throughout the three categories of research. Finally, future research should also seek to include the parents of students of educational disabilities as well as the students themselves in an effort to have a well-rounded perception of how parental involvement impacts the initial special education referral process, progress on IEP goals, as well as assessment outcomes.

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Appendix A

Teacher Perceptions of Parental Involvement Survey

Background Questions:

|                             |      |        |                      |
|-----------------------------|------|--------|----------------------|
| <b>What is your gender?</b> | Male | Female | Prefer not to answer |
|-----------------------------|------|--------|----------------------|

|                          |       |       |       |       |     |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| <b>What is your age?</b> | 22-32 | 33-43 | 44-54 | 55-65 | 66+ |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|

|  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| <b>Are you certified in the area of regular education?</b> | YES | NO |
| <b>Are you certified in the area of special education?</b> | YES | NO |

|  |                   |                   |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| <b>What area is your current educational assignment?</b> | Special education | Regular education |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|

|   |      |       |       |     |
|---|------|-------|-------|-----|
| <b>How many years of teaching experience do you have?</b> | 0-10 | 11-21 | 22-32 | 33+ |
|---|------|-------|-------|-----|

|   | <b>1<br/>Strongly<br/>Disagree</b> | <b>2<br/>Disagree</b> | <b>3<br/>Agree</b> | <b>4<br/>Strongly<br/>Agree</b> |
|---|------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>To what degree is parental involvement effective during the initial special education process (i.e., initial referral-initial evaluation-initial IEP) important?</b> |                                    |                       |                    |                                 |
| During the initial referral process, parental involvement is valuable.  |                                    |                       |                    |                                 |
| Parents should be involved during the initial special education process.  |                                    |                       |                    |                                 |
| Parents should not be involved in the initial special education process.  |                                    |                       |                    |                                 |
| Parental involvement has no value during the initial special education process.   |                                    |                       |                    |                                 |
| Parental input during the initial special education process has no impact on the process.   |                                    |                       |                    |                                 |
| Parental involvement has value during the initial special education process.  |                                    |                       |                    |                                 |

|  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Parental involvement during the initial special education process impacts outcomes.  |  |  |  |  |
| Parental involvement during the initial special education process does not impact outcomes.  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>To what degree does parental involvement affect student progress on IEP goals?</b>  |  |  |  |  |
| Parental involvement does not impact student progress on the IEP goals.  |  |  |  |  |
| Parental involvement does impact student progress on IEP goals.  |  |  |  |  |
| Parents should be aware of their child’s IEP goals.  |  |  |  |  |
| Parents should not be aware of their child’s IEP goals.  |  |  |  |  |
| IEP goal progress for students is reflective of parental involvement.  |  |  |  |  |
| IEP goal progress for students is not reflective of parental involvement.  |  |  |  |  |
| Students make progress toward their IEP goals because their parents are involved.  |  |  |  |  |
| Students who do not make progress on their IEP goals do not have parents that are involved.  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>To what degree does parental involvement impact formative and summative assessment outcomes (i.e., teacher-generated assessments, districts assessments, state assessments) for students with educational disabilities?</b> |  |  |  |  |
| Parental involvement impacts assessment outcomes.  |  |  |  |  |
| Parental involvement does not impact assessment outcomes.  |  |  |  |  |
| Parental assistance with learning tasks helps students perform better on assessments.  |  |  |  |  |
| Parental assistance with learning tasks does not help students perform better on assessments.  |  |  |  |  |
| Parental awareness of assessment expectations (areas to be assessed, timeframes) is effective in helping students show progress.   |  |  |  |  |
| Parental awareness of assessment expectations (areas to be assessed, timeframes) has no impact on student growth.  |  |  |  |  |
| Parents who help their child with homework positively impacts the child’s performance on assessments.  |  |  |  |  |

## Appendix B

### Letter to Superintendents

Greetings,

My name is Elizabeth Kenner and I am a doctoral student with Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Missouri. I am currently a special education administrator in the St. Louis area. My research seeks to learn from the perceptions of teachers, certificated in the areas of regular and/or special education, as it relates to the impact of parental involvement on the academic achievement and progress noted on IEP goals for students with educational disabilities at the elementary level. With your approval, I would like to disseminate surveys to teachers, certificated in the areas of regular and/or special education, via an electronic survey generator, questionpro.com, in order to gain their perspectives specific to the impact of parental involvement during the initial special education referral process, progress a student makes specific to his/her IEP goals, as well as overall assessment outcomes for students with educational disabilities.

The information that I gain from teachers' participation will positively impact this research and contribute to the overall conclusions and recommendations made regarding the impact of parental involvement for our students with educational disabilities. Confidentiality of participation will be maintained throughout the survey process.

I sincerely appreciate your time and consideration for this request and look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

Elizabeth Kenner, Ed. S.  
Doctoral Student  
Southwest Baptist University

## Appendix C

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) 2013

The following criteria, known as Compliance Standards and Indicators, are mandated for determining if a student meets eligibility for a special education disability/identification. The criteria is as follows:

1. Autism (Standard and Indicator 600)
  - a. The evaluation report documents the use of **all** of the following procedures to address the areas of concern:
    - i. **600.10.a.** Review of medical records,
    - ii. **600.10.b.** Observation of the child's behavior across multiple environments
    - iii. **600.10.c.** An in-depth social history
  - b. The evaluation report documents disturbances of speech, language-cognitive development, and nonverbal communication in **one (1) or more** of the following:
    - i. **600.20.a.** Abnormalities that extend beyond speech to many aspects of the communication process
    - ii. **600.20.b.** Absence of communicative language or, if present, language lacks communicative intent
    - iii. **600.20.c.** Characteristics involve both deviance and delay
    - iv. **600.20.d.** Deficits in the capacity to use language for social communication, both receptive and expressive **AND**
    - v. The evaluation report documents a deficit in the child's capacity to relate appropriately to people, events or
    - vi. objects through one (1) or more of the following ways:
    - vii. 600.30.a. Evidence of abnormalities in relating to people, events, or objects
    - viii. 600.30.b. Deficits in capacity to form relationships with people
    - ix. 600.30.c. Use of objects in an age-appropriate or functional manner are absent, arrested, or delayed
    - x. 600.30.d. Seeks consistency in environmental events to the point of exhibiting rigidity in routines
    - xi. 600.40.a. The evaluation report documents all areas in which the child's autism adversely affects her/his
    - xii. educational performance.
    - xiii. 600.40.b. The documentation includes a description of the educational concerns
    - xiv. 600.50.a. The evaluation report documents the results of the evaluation and the team's conclusion that the child's autism is not the result of an emotional disability **AND, IF APPROPRIATE**

- c. The evaluation report documents deficits in the child's developmental rates and sequences through one (1) or more of the following:
    - i. 600.60.a. Delays, arrests or regressions in physical, social or learning skills
    - ii. 600.60.b. Areas of precocious development with other skill areas at normal or extremely depressed rates
    - iii. 600.60.c. Skill acquisition does not follow normal developmental patterns AND/OR, IF APPROPRIATE
  - d. The evaluation report documents deficits in the child's responses to sensory stimuli through one (1) or more of the following:
    - i. 600.70.a. Behavior ranges from hyperactive to unresponsive to people and objects and can alternate between these states over periods ranging from hours to months
    - ii. 600.70.b. Disturbances in auditory, visual, olfactory, gustatory, tactile and kinesthetic responses
    - iii. 600.70.c. Responds to stimulation inappropriately and in repetitive or non-meaningful ways
2. Blind (Standard and Indicator 700)
- a. The evaluation report documents both hearing and visual impairments as described in the criteria for Hearing Impairment/Deafness and Visual Impairment through:
    - i. 700.10.a. Comprehensive evaluations by a qualified otologist, otolaryngologist, or audiologist AND
    - ii. 700.10.b. Comprehensive evaluations by a licensed optometrist or board-certified ophthalmologist
  - b. A comprehensive educational evaluation is present which documents:
    - i. 700.20.a. All areas in which the child's visual and hearing impairments adversely affect her/his educational performance
    - ii. 700.20.b. The combination of the hearing and vision loss cause severe concern in the following areas:
    - iii. 700.20.b.(1) Communication
    - iv. 700.20.b.(2) Development
    - v. 700.20.b.(3) Education needs
3. Emotional Disturbance (Standard and Indicator 800)
- a. The evaluation report documents a comprehensive evaluation which confirms the presence of an emotional disturbance and includes a description of one (1) or more of the following characteristics:
    - i. 800.10.a. Inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors.
    - ii. 800.10.b. Inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
    - iii. 800.10.c. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
    - iv. 800.10.d. General pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.

- v. 800.10.e. Tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or social problems.
  - b. NOTE: The term emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia, but does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted unless it is determined they also have an emotional disturbance.
  - c. The evaluation report includes an analysis of the identified concerns through both of the following methods:
    - i. 800.20.a. Observations of the behavior in different environments, AND
    - ii. 800.20.b. An in-depth social history.
  - d. NOTE: The in-depth social history may include a developmental history, significant life events, and/or reports from parents, physicians, and teachers.
- 4. Hearing Impairment/Deafness (Standard and Indicator 900)
  - a. 900.10.a. The evaluation report documents a comprehensive hearing evaluation, by a qualified audiologist, which confirms a hearing impairment or deafness.
  - b. A comprehensive educational evaluation is present which documents:
  - c. 900.20.a Areas in which the child's hearing impairment or deafness adversely affects her/his educational performance.
  - d. 900.20.b. A description of the educational concerns.
- 5. Intellectual Disability (Standard and Indicator 1000)
  - a. Documentation regarding the child's performance includes the following:
    - i. 1000.10.a. Name of cognitive measure used
    - ii. 1000.10.b. Score obtained for child
    - iii. 1000.10.c. Statement that score is equal to or below 2.0 SD from the mean for that measure which is valid when considering age, ethnic and cultural background
  - b. NOTE: The score obtained will vary depending upon the instrument. It may be an IQ score, scale score, standard score, percentile, Z score, or developmental age.
  - c. Documentation of adaptive behavior includes the following:
    - i. 1000.20.a. Name of the adaptive behavior scale administered
    - ii. 1000.20.b. Results of that evaluation
    - iii. 1000.20.c. The overall score on measured adaptive behavior is consistent with cognitive abilities. AND
  - d. Results from formal and/or informal assessments in achievement and other areas of functioning such as communication skills and social skill development indicate the following:
    - i. 1000.30.a. Reduced cognitive abilities and adaptive behavior adversely affect educational performance
    - ii. 1000.30.b. Specific areas of impact are described
- 6. Multiple Disability (Standard and Indicator 1100)
  - a. The evaluation report documents at least two (2) diagnosed physical/sensory impairments by the following qualified personnel:

- i. 1100.10.a. A physical evaluation by a licensed physician. AND
    - ii. 1100.10.b. A visual evaluation by a qualified optometrist or ophthalmologist. OR
    - iii. 1100.10.c. An auditory evaluation by a qualified audiologist.
  - b. The evaluation report documents one (1) diagnosed physical/sensory impairment by the following qualified personnel:
    - i. 1100.20.a. A physical evaluation by a licensed physician. OR
    - ii. 1100.20.b. A visual evaluation by a qualified optometrist or ophthalmologist. OR
    - iii. 1100.20.c. An auditory evaluation by a qualified audiologist. AND
    - iv. 1100.20.d. All components for documentation of a concomitant disabling condition using the approved eligibility criteria (see appropriate eligibility criteria).
    - v. 1100.30.a. A comprehensive educational evaluation is present which documents all of the areas in which the child's multiple disabilities adversely affects her/his educational performance.
    - vi. 1100.30.b. The documentation includes a description of the educational concerns.
    - vii. 1100.30.c. Documentation shows the combination of disabilities causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments.
- 7. Orthopedic Impairment (Standard and Indicator 1200)
  - a. 1200.10.a. The evaluation report documents a comprehensive physical evaluation by a licensed physician that results in a diagnosis of a severe orthopedic impairment.
  - b. NOTE (1): Orthopedic impairments include congenital anomalies (i.e., club foot, absence of some member, etc.), impairments caused by disease (e.g., poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis, etc.) and other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputations and fractures or burns that cause contractures).
  - c. NOTE (2): A copy of physician's report may be attached.
  - d. 1200.20.a. A comprehensive evaluation is present which documents all of the areas in which the child's orthopedic impairment adversely affects her/his educational performance.
  - e. 1200.20.b. The documentation includes a description of the adverse educational impact of the physical impairment.
- 8. Other Health Impairment (Standard and Indicator 1300)
  - a. 1300.10.a. The evaluation report documents a comprehensive health evaluation by a licensed physician that results in the diagnosis of a chronic or acute health problem. OR
    - i. 1300.10.b. For those conditions not requiring a medical diagnosis (e.g, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), the evaluation report documents a comprehensive evaluation by a licensed psychologist, licensed

professional counselor, licensed clinical social worker, or school psychologist. AND

- ii. 1300.10.c. Documentation indicates that the health impairment results in limited strength, vitality or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli.
  - b. NOTE (1): Examples of chronic or acute health problems include asthma, ADD/ADHD, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, tourettes syndrome, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, and sickle cell anemia when those conditions adversely affect a child's educational performance.
  - c. NOTE (2): A copy of the evaluator's report may be attached.
  - d. 1300.20.a. A comprehensive educational evaluation is present which documents all of the areas in which the child's health impairment adversely affects her/his educational performance.
  - e. 1300.20.b. The documentation includes a description of the educational concerns.
9. Specific Learning Disability (Standard and Indicator 1400)
- a. A comprehensive evaluation report is present and documents:
    - i. The child does not achieve adequately for the child's age or to meet State approved grade-level standards in one or more of the following areas, when provided with learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the child's age or State-approved grade-level standards:
    - ii. 1400.10.a. Basic Reading Skill
    - iii. 1400.10.b. Reading Comprehension
    - iv. 1400.10.c. Reading Fluency Skills
    - v. 1400.10.d. Written Expression
    - vi. 1400.10.e. Mathematics Calculation
    - vii. 1400.10.f. Mathematics Problem Solving
    - viii. 1400.10.g. Listening comprehension
    - ix. 1400.10.h. Oral Expression
  - b. **RESPONSE TO SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH-BASED INTERVENTION**
    - i. The child does not make sufficient progress to meet age or State approved grade-level standards in one or more of the areas identified above when using a process based on the child's response to scientific, research-based interventions.
    - ii. Documentation must include:
      - 1. 1400.20.a. Documentation is present that agency procedures for identification of a child with Specific Learning Disabilities were followed.
      - 2. 1400.20.b. Instructional strategies used and the student-centered data collected.
      - 3. 1400.20.c. Documentation that the child's parents were notified about:

- a. 1400.20.c.(1) the State's policies regarding the amount and nature of student performance data that would be collected and the general education services that would be provided;
  - b. 1400.20.c.(2) Strategies for increasing the child's rate of learning, and;
  - c. 1400.20.c.(3) The parents' right to request an evaluation. OR
- c. DISCREPANCY: 1.) The child exhibits a pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance, achievement, or both, relative to age, State approved grade-level standards, or intellectual development.
  - i. Documentation must include:
    - 1. 1400.20.d. Evidence of pattern of strengths and weaknesses AND
    - 2. 1400.20.e. Discrepancy of at least 1.5 standard deviations between achievement and intellectual ability. OR
    - 3. 1400.20.f. A child who does not display a discrepancy of at least 1.5 standard deviations as defined above, may be deemed to have a specific learning disability through the use of professional judgment.
  - ii. NOTE: Documentation must include evidence that the child is not achieving adequately or making sufficient progress based on a review of formal and informal assessments.
- d. The public agency must ensure that the child is observed in the child's learning environment (including the regular classroom setting) to document the child's academic performance and behavior in the areas of difficulty.
  - i. Documentation should include:
    - 1. 1400.30.a. Information from an observation in routine classroom instruction and monitoring of the child's performance done before the child was referred for an evaluation; or
    - 2. 1400.30.b. Observation by a qualified professional in the regular classroom after the child has been referred for an evaluation and parental consent is obtained.
    - 3. 1400.30.c. Relevant behavior, if any, noted during the observation and the relationship of that behavior to the child's academic functioning.
  - ii. NOTE: In the case of a child of less than school age or out of school, an observation must be done in an environment appropriate for a child of that age.
- e. The determination of the existence of a specific learning disability must be made by the child's parents and a team of qualified professionals, which must include:
  - i. 1400.40.a. The child's regular education teacher. OR

- ii. 1400.40.b. If the child does not have a regular teacher, a regular classroom teacher qualified to teach a child of his/her age. OR
    - iii. 1400.40.c. For a child of less than school age, an individual qualified to teach a child of his/her age. AND
    - iv. 1400.40.d. At least one person qualified to conduct individual diagnostic examinations of children such as a
      - v. school psychologist, school psychological examiner, speech/language pathologist, special education teacher, or remedial reading teacher.
  - f. In interpreting evaluation data for the purpose of determining if a child is a child with a specific learning disability:
  - g. 1400.50.a. The public agency must document relevant medical findings. OR
  - h. If no relevant medical findings, this must be noted in the evaluation report.
    - i. 1400.50.b. Each team member must certify in writing whether the report reflects her/his conclusion(s). If it does not, the group member must submit a separate statement presenting the member's conclusions.
  - i. NOTE: This requirement is not applicable to parent(s) of a child.
  - j. The report includes a statement that the group considered as part of the evaluation:
    - i. 1400.50.c. Data that demonstrates that prior to or as part of the referral process, the child was provided appropriate instruction in regular education settings, delivered by qualified personnel, and
    - ii. 1400.50.d. Data-based documentation of repeated assessments of achievement at reasonable intervals, reflecting formal assessment of student progress during instruction, which was provided to the child's parents.
  - k. The team determines that its findings of a Specific Learning Disability are not primarily the result of:
    - i. 1400.60.a. A visual, hearing, or motor disability;
    - ii. 1400.60.b. Intellectual Disability;
    - iii. 1400.60.c. Emotional disturbance;
    - iv. 1400.60.d. Cultural factors;
    - v. 1400.60.e. Environmental or economic disadvantage;
10. Language Impairment (Standard and Indicator 1500)
- a. The evaluation report documents the consistent inappropriate use of one (1) or more of the following structures of language:
    - i. 1500.10.a. Morphology (structuring words from smaller units of meaning)
    - ii. 1500.10.b. Syntax (putting words together in phrases and sentences—sometimes referred to as grammar deficits)

- iii. 1500.10.c. Semantics (selecting words to represent intended meaning and combining words and sentences to represent intended meaning—sometimes referred to as vocabulary deficits)
    - iv. 1500.10.d. Pragmatics (using the functions of language to communicate with others)
  - b. The evaluation report documents that one (1) or more of the following procedures were used to assess the structure(s) of language:
    - i. 1500.20.a. Language sampling:
      - ii. 1500.20.a.(1) Method of elicitation of the sample
      - iii. 1500.20.a.(2) Setting for the sample
      - iv. 1500.20.a.(3) Analysis procedures used
      - v. 1500.20.a.(4) Description of the child’s language deficits identified by the sample OR
        - 1. 1500.20.b. Structured clinical tasks:
          - 2. 1500.20.b.(1) Language activity initiated
          - 3. 1500.20.b.(2) Setting for the clinical tasks
          - 4. 1500.20.b.(3) Analysis procedures used
          - 5. 1500.20.b.(4) Description of the child’s language deficits identified by the clinical tasks
  - c. 1500.30.a. The evaluation report documents the results of two (2) norm-referenced and standardized language assessments which measure the same areas of language.
  - d. 1500.30.b. The evaluation determines whether the child’s language functioning is significantly below the child’s cognitive abilities. The following criteria apply:
    - i. 1500.30.b.(1) Children ages 3 through 5 years, not kindergarten eligible: 2 standard deviations below peers.
    - ii. 1500.30.b.(2) Children who are kindergarten age eligible and older: 1.5 standard deviations below cognitive ability.
  - e. 1500.30.c Use professional judgment with sufficient data present in the evaluation report to document the existence of a language disorder even though the criterion defined in 1500.30.b.(1) and 1500.30.b.(2) has not been met.
  - f. NOTE: If unable to obtain the child’s full-scale cognitive score, professional judgment must be used. AND
  - g. 1500.50.a. The evaluation report includes information that addresses the extent to which the child’s language functioning adversely affects the child’s educational performance.
  - h. 1500.50.b. Specific areas of impact are described.
  - i. 1500.60.a. The evaluation report documents the team’s conclusion that the child’s language impairment is not a result of dialectal differences or second language influence.
- 11. Sound System Disorder (Standard and Indicator 1600)
  - a. The evaluation report describes the child’s sound production errors. These errors may be described as:

- i. Single Sound Errors
      - 1. 1600.10.a. Substitution(s)
      - 2. 1600.10.b. Omission(s)
      - 3. 1600.10.c. Distortion(s)
      - 4. 1600.10.d. Addition(s)
    - ii. Multiple Errors
      - 1. 1600.10.e. Phonological pattern(s)
  - b. The evaluation report documents the extent to which the child's sound production is outside the limits of State designated normative data.
  - c. The evaluation report includes documentation of the following:
  - d. 1600.30.a. Specific sound production errors identified using a single word test and/or a sentence/phrase repetition task/connected speech sample. AND
    - i. 1600.30.b. A speech sampling procedure that documents the following:
      - ii. 1600.30.b.(1) Method of elicitation
      - iii. 1600.30.b.(2) Setting for the activity
      - iv. 1600.30.b.(3) Analysis procedures used
      - v. 1600.30.b.(4) Identification of sound errors
      - vi. 1600.30.b.(5) Degree of intelligibility and/or impact on listener perception
    - vii. 1600.30.c. Use professional judgment with sufficient data present in the evaluation report to document the existence of a disorder due to multiple errors in the sound system which compromise the child's intelligibility and/or the listener's perception even though the recorded errors are considered within normal developmental guidelines. AND
  - e. 1600.50.a. The evaluation report addresses the adverse educational impact of the child's sound system disorder.
  - f. 1600.60.a. The evaluation report documents the team's conclusion that the child's sound system disorder is not the result of dialectal differences or second language influences.
- 12. Speech/Fluency (Standard and Indicator 1700)
  - a. A comprehensive evaluation report is present which documents that the child consistently exhibits one(1) or more of the following behaviors:
    - i. 1700.10.a. Sound, syllable, or word repetitions
    - ii. 1700.10.b. Prolongation of sounds, syllables, or words
    - iii. 1700.10.c. Blockages
    - iv. 1700.10.d. Hesitations
  - b. NOTE: Associated symptoms of gesturing and/or extraneous facial or body activity related to the dysfluency may also be evident and addressed in the report.
  - c. The evaluation report documents a sample of the child's speech in a variety of contexts. The report addresses the following:
    - i. 1700.20.a. Method of elicitation

- ii. 1700.20.b. Settings in which sampling occurred
      - iii. 1700.20.c. Analysis procedures used
      - iv. 1700.20.d. Description of dysfluency
    - d. The evaluation report documents the child’s fluency as significantly below the norm in one (1) of the following ways:
      - e. 1700.30.a. Five (5) dysfluencies per minute in each context. OR
      - f. 1700.30.b. A dysfluency rate of 10% or greater.
      - g. 1700.40.a. Sufficient data is present in the evaluation report to document through formal and informal assessments the existence of a fluency deficit when the criteria outlined in Indicator 1700.10-1700.30 are not met.
      - h. 1700.50.a. The evaluation report includes information that addresses the extent to which the dysfluency adversely affects the child’s educational performance.
13. Speech/Voice (Standard and Indicator 1800)
- a. The evaluation report documents that the child exhibits deviations in one (1) or more of the parameters of voice:
    - i. 1800.10.a. Pitch (e.g., shrill or guttural)
    - ii. 1800.10.b. Quality (e.g., breathy, hoarse, or gravelly)
    - iii. 1800.10.c. Volume (e.g., soft, loud, nasal, or denasal)
  - b. NOTE: Concern in one (1) or more parameters of voice could indicate the need for a medical referral to obtain a comprehensive voice evaluation by a qualified otolaryngologist (ear, nose, and throat specialist). A medical report may be attached.
  - c. 1800.20.a. The evaluation report describes whether the child’s voice is discrepant from the expected parameters for children of same age, sex, and/or culture
  - d. 1800.30.a. The evaluation report documents that the child’s voice disorder adversely affects the child’s educational performance.
  - e. 1800.40.a. The evaluation report documents the child’s voice disorder is not the result of any temporary conditions, (e.g., normal voice changes, allergies, colds, or other conditions).
  - f. 1800.40.b. An explanation is provided of any known condition(s) that may temporarily impact the child’s voice disorder.
14. Traumatic Brain Injury (Standard and Indicator 1900)
- a. Evaluation report documents the diagnosis of a traumatic brain injury by:
    - i. 1900.10.a. A licensed physician. OR
    - ii. 1900.10.b. A neuropsychological assessment identifying traumatic brain injury.
  - b. NOTE (1): The term includes open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as: cognition, language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem solving, sensory, perceptual and motor abilities, psychological behavior, physical functions, information processing, and speech.

- c. NOTE (2): The medical and/or neuropsychological reports may be attached to the evaluation report. OR
  - d. 1900.20.a. Evaluation report includes substantial data to document the medical basis for a head injury even though a physician has not made a medical diagnosis of a head injury. AND
  - e. 1900.30.a. A comprehensive evaluation report is present which documents deficits in acquisition, retention, and/or generalization of skills resulting from the brain injury.
  - f. Documentation indicates deficits in one (1) or more of the following areas:
    - i. 1900.40.a. Building or maintaining social competence
    - ii. 1900.40.b. Performance of functional daily living skills across settings
    - iii. 1900.40.c. Ability to acquire and retain new skills
    - iv. 1900.40.d. Ability to retrieve prior information
15. Vision Impairment (Standard and Indicator 2000)
- a. The evaluation report documents a comprehensive visual evaluation, by a qualified optometrist or ophthalmologist, which confirms:
    - i. 2000.10.a. Visual impairment. OR
    - ii. 2000.10.b. A progressive vision loss
  - b. The child is identified with a visual impairment when:
    - i. 2000.20.a. Visual acuity has been determined to fall within the range of 20/70 to 20/200 in the better eye with best correction by glasses. OR
  - c. The child is identified as blind when:
    - i. 2000.20.b. Visual acuity has been determined to fall at 20/200 or less in the better eye after best correction by glasses or when a visual field measures 20° or less. OR
  - d. The child is identified with a progressive vision loss when;
    - i. 2000.20.c. An optometrist or ophthalmologist has made a diagnosis of a progressive vision loss.
  - e. 2000.30.a. A comprehensive educational evaluation is present which documents all of the areas in which the child's visual impairment/blindness adversely affects her/his educational performance.
  - f. 2000.30.b. The documentation includes a description of the adverse educational impact of the visual impairment. (Dr. Margie Vandeven, 2015)

Appendix D

Approval Letter from Special School District



April 6, 2017

Ms. Elizabeth Kenner  
5439 Hagemann Pointe Dr.  
St. Louis, MO 63128

Dear Ms. Kenner

I am pleased to notify you that your application for conducting research with SSD titled *Teacher Perceptions of Parental Involvement for Students with Educational Disabilities in Elementary Schools* has been accepted. This acceptance indicates that we have examined your application and granted permission to conduct research with SSD teachers. Where your research involves staff of *partner districts*, it will be necessary to meet those districts' requirements.

This approval is valid for one year. If you anticipate that data collection will extend beyond that timeline, please contact us. We would appreciate notification of any significant changes to your research design. We also ask that you forward us the findings of your study when complete.

If I can further clarify or answer questions related to the permissions granted, please do not hesitate to contact me. Please work with our office to finalize procedures for recruitment and data collection. Thank you and good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Matthew Traughber", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Matthew Traughber, Ph.D.  
Evaluation and Research Administrator  
(314) 989-8520  
[mctraughber@ssdmo.org](mailto:mctraughber@ssdmo.org)

cc: Donald McCary, Executive Director of Planning and Development

Special School District

12110 Clayton Road / Town & Country, MO 63131 phone: 314.989.8100 [www.ssdmo.org](http://www.ssdmo.org)

Mission: In collaboration with partner districts, we provide technical education and a wide variety of individualized educational and support services designed for each student's successful contribution to our community. Vision: Partners for every student's success  
Values: student success • collaboration • integrity • stewardship • continuous improvement • equity