

Topic: Build child, family and community relationships that promote child development and learning.

Acar, S., & Akamoglu, Y. (2014). Practices for parent participation in early intervention/early childhood special education. *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education*, 6, 80-101.

Context

The importance of including parents in the planning of and decision making related to EI/ECSE services has been widely documented (Bruder, 2000; Dunst, 2000; IDEA, PL 101-476, 1990; PL 102-119 Part H, 1991; Part A-D, IDEA, 1997, 2004), yet in practice, their inclusion has often been unsuccessful and disappointing (Hansuvadha, 2009). The complexity of the lives of parents, their concerns, priorities, and resources must be addressed to effectively involve them in the mutual goal of improving developmental outcomes of their children. There are clear benefits gained by parents, children, and practitioners by supporting parent participation in the EI/ECSE process.

Purpose of Article

This manuscript describes a set of practices to strengthen parent participation in EI/ECSE programs. These practices were derived from research studies demonstrating that parent participation has a positive impact on child outcomes, practitioner skills, and competencies, and that families can effectively use intervention strategies that are part of their children's support plan.

Practices to Promote Parent Participation

The authors state that the first step in supporting parent involvement during EI/ECSE process is to assess their needs and interests, conducting interviews that include "structured yet open-ended questions." Family needs indicators such as *Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming System, Family Report* (2nd ed.) (Bricker, 2002), or the *Routine Based Interview Form* (McWilliam, 2006) are cited and a table of interview questions is provided. The second step is developing an environment that recognizes and celebrates the unique needs and interests of each family. The authors present vignettes illustrating how teachers can do that and provide a table of

teacher best practices in various areas such as decision making, collaboration, training, and communication to support parent involvement.

Discussion

For the EI/ECSE process to be successful, practitioners must have the skills to identify family needs, interests, and concerns and to plan supports and practices that are responsive to them. They must be able to advocate for families to be included in decision making related to choosing the time, setting, and mode of special education services as well as developing their child's goals with a multidisciplinary team. Finally, they must be able to provide families with information related to medical insurance, family rights, and where to acquire additional support.

How to Use This Article

For Instructors and Practitioners

It would be beneficial for scholars to have small group discussions on the feasibility of implementing the practices and strategies presented in this article. For instance, do all early intervention and early childhood inclusive settings provide trained interpreters during face-to-face meetings for families who are linguistically diverse? If not, how could they make that happen? Scholars may find the strategies and practices by accessing the article at <http://www.int-jecse.net/article-details/2014/6/1/17> or by cutting and pasting the article title into their search engine.

References

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The ACCEPT (Advancing Community College Efforts in Paraprofessional Training) Project is a federally-funded cooperative agreement between the U. S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte College of Education. The focus of this effort is the inclusion of special education content in the coursework and experiences provided within the associate degree program in early childhood education at targeted state-supported community colleges in North Carolina.

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