Problem of Practice
Impeding of parent opportunity to equally participate in IEP decision making—denial of FAPE

- Parents are uninformed of their special education rights
- Parents are passive observers
- Parents are unable to effectively advocate for their child’s education

Research Questions
1. What issues/concerns exist among parents with respect to participating in special education meetings for their child?
2. What supports do parents need to engage effectively in special education meetings for their child?

Theories/Frameworks
- Interpretivism—interpret meaning through interviews. The interview method allows the researcher to learn about the parent’s involvement, perceptions, stories of their IEP experiences, ideas of weaknesses, strengths, and of their special education knowledge (Knopf & Swick, 2008; Spann et al, 2003; Lord Nelson et al, 2004; Fish, 2006). Because of cultural norms, they may not feel comfortable advocating, disagreeing, or with asking questions of the professionals (Gregg et al., 2011).
- Self-efficacy Theory—Parents make their decision of involvement based on their appraisal of their capabilities. The more self-efficacy then the more involved the parent will be (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) When the parents are given the special education process knowledge they feel more confident at the IEP meetings and IEP participation rises. (Fish, 2006; Underwood, 2010; Worcester et al., 2008).
- Communities of Practice—members empower each other. A community of practice is a group that shares dialogue, meaning, and works together for a shared purpose (Wenger et al., 2002).

Methodology
Interviews with parents of students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

Results
- When parents were educated on the special education rights, they were confident in advocating and considered themselves to be an equal participant at the IEP meeting.
- The parents who did not have the special education knowledge felt that the IEP meeting was above their understanding. This caused them to be silent during the meeting.
- Parents would like better collaboration, before and during the IEP meetings, with the teachers.
- Parents did not like just hearing the negative statements about their child.
- IEP accommodations need to be explained and described to parents.

Looking to the Future:
- One page, easy to read, IEP agenda checklist of IEP meeting sections
- Copy of accommodations sheet for parent
- Short summary of special education rights for parents
- Facilitated IEP meetings
- Parking-lot idea used at meeting
- Parent is given their own draft IEP copy to read along, at meeting.
- A booklet of district special education resources/contact information given to parent at eligibility
- Checklist for teachers to use for collaborating with parents on IEP
- Special Education support group within the school setting

Participants
Parents of children with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
Special Education Teachers IEP team

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