

SpEdTIPS: SPECIAL EDUCATION TEAMS INCREASING PARENTAL  
SATISFACTION FOR IEP MEETINGS

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by  
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SATISFACTION FOR IEP MEETINGS

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to everyone that has supported me along my educational journey. I have only made it to this moment because of all of the love, encouragement, patience, and prayers of those surrounding me. I am not completing this degree alone.

Most importantly, I dedicate this work to my parents and my husband. Mom and Dad, thank you for being my biggest cheerleaders. This is only possible because you believed in me and allowed me the means to pursue my dreams without ever looking back. Thanks to you, I able to live a life I love. And Cody, your patience and love through this journey has made me feel so blessed to be married to you. Through all of the late nights, early mornings, and challenging mood swings, you continued to show your love for me and I will forever be grateful for that. Thanks for loving me through my crazy and supporting me through every hill and valley.

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## ABSTRACT



Previous research has shown that parents of children receiving special education services often have negative feelings associated with Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, such as feeling confused, overwhelmed, intimidated, powerless, frustrated, and undervalued (Stoner et al., 2005; İlik & Er, 2019; Mueller & Vick, 2019). Currently there is a culture of placing more weight on professional judgement and assessment data rather than on parental observations and knowledge of their child when making decisions for an IEP (Fish, 2008). Parents are intended, and required by law (IDEA, 2006), to be equal members of the IEP team. The current study developed and piloted an intervention used to increase parent satisfaction in IEP meetings, the SpEdTIPS intervention. This intervention focuses on action steps that can be implemented by case managers before, during, and after the IEP meeting to increase parents' positive experiences within IEP meetings. Results showed that case managers perceived parent satisfaction to increase from pre to post assessment, however, although parent ratings improved slightly, their ratings of satisfaction were not found to be statistically significant. Further investigation is needed on the individual components of the developed intervention and how parent satisfaction in IEP meetings is impacted.

*Keywords:* parent satisfaction, IEP meeting, education, intervention

# CHAPTER I

## Introduction

In the United States, approximately 7 million children receive special education services, which equates to 14% of public school students (NCES, 2019). Therefore, roughly 7 million parents or guardians (from now on, referred to as ‘parents’) also go through the evaluation process to help their children access possible school-based services. As indicated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), special education law requires that a parent be a member of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) evaluation team (IDEA, 2006). And although legally required members, parents often lack engagement and are inactive members of the IEP process (Martin et al., 2006). Other essential members of this team are the student’s general education teacher, a special education teacher, one administrator, and an individual who can interpret evaluation results (frequently, this is the school psychologist). Additional IEP team members can be present based on the individual needs of the student (e.g., speech-language pathologist, social worker, educational diagnostician). These parties bring their expertise, skillset, and unique perspective to best interpret the student’s individual needs. Each person, parents included, contributes essential information and should play a vital role in making decisions that will impact the student’s educational future. Although it is necessary to have IEP teams, it also brings challenges and barriers.

Many struggles arise when participating in and facilitating IEP meetings. Beck and DeSutter (2020) found that “the themes most frequently associated with meeting difficulties focused on attendance, disagreement, poor teacher contributions, and logistics” (p. 134). Attendance encompassed scheduling difficulties across IEP members, having to do multiple

parent reach outs, lack of motivation for school team members to attend, and being unprepared. Often, these attendance concerns cause turmoil between group members, leading to high levels of frustration and resentment. The theme of disagreement mainly describes the conflict between school members and parents. For example, while preparing for an IEP, general education teachers lack support from parents (Çimen, Öztürk, & Eratay, 2010). İlik and Er (2019) found similar results when examining teacher opinions on parental participation during the IEP process. Their study concluded that 50% of teachers expressed that they received no help from parents while preparing for the IEP. It is incredibly unclear how parent participation should look. One study posed the question to teachers, “Do you think the parents need to participate in the preparation and implementation stages of IEP?” The results showed that 41% indicated that parents need to participate in all the stages of IEP, 36.3% agreed that parents do not need to help in preparing and implementing an IEP, and 22.7% felt that parents are partially required to participate (İlik & Er, 2019). There is often a lack of cohesion across school districts and buildings regarding their parents' participation in the evaluation process. Lack of consistency across schools can lead to teachers feeling confused and uncertain about how much they should involve parents, at what stages they should involve parents, and how they can contribute.

Parents are unsure of how they should be involved in the IEP process. Empirically supported research states that parents' beliefs surrounding their role in their child's education impact their level of involvement (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007). However, when parents contribute their opinions, teachers seem to view their contributions as irrelevant, unhelpful, and non-beneficial in the planning process (Çimen, Öztürk, & Eratay, 2010; Avcioglu, 2011). This could cause a lack of communication on the teacher's

part or even the practice of disregarding what parents have to say. Parents perceive these as negative interactions with teachers as they feel unwelcome. One study found that 80% of parents did make efforts to participate in the IEP but felt like no one valued their input (Ílik & Er, 2019). This conflict between parents and schools can be seen in many forms. Perhaps teachers feel that parents are uninvolved or that parents feel that teachers do not reach out enough. Disagreements could also be in the form of parents believing their child needs more services or accommodations that the school is eligible to provide or that parents are not interested in services for their children, either finding them excessive or not wanting their child to be labeled. The bigger picture is that any disagreement can lead to team members feeling defensive or unheard.

Beck and DeSutter (2020) found the third theme was inadequate teacher contributions to the special education evaluation process. They found that teachers often came to meetings unprepared and perseverated on the wrong issues (Beck & DeSutter, 2020). For example, team members focus on the problem rather than the solution and continue to list the student's deficits. The study also found that teachers usually frame challenges in unhelpful manners and sometimes word things inappropriately. For instance, when discussing executive functioning concerns and a teacher mentions "the student's locker is always a mess and they can never find a thing in their desk because they just throw everything in there." Inadequate teacher contributions also described participants who did not provide much information or interaction during the session. Research shows that general education teachers only gave input during 9% of the meeting time (Martin et al., 2006). And often, when teachers contribute, they use educational jargon that parents were unlikely able to understand (Engel, 1991; Salas, 2004; Daugherty, 2015). It is important to note that teachers add tremendous

value to these conversations and are essential members of the IEP teams. However, research shows that teacher education programs lack training on fostering positive relationships with parents (Walker & Dotger, 2012) and how to communicate effectively during these collaboration meetings (İlik & Sarı, 2017). And finally, there was a theme related to the challenge of overall logistics, such as planning the meetings, completing, and compiling paperwork, preparing for the meeting, etc. These may seem like minor barriers when experienced in isolation, but when experienced in combination, they are determinantal to students, families, and educators.

An IEP can be a daunting, confusing, intimidating, and overwhelming process for parents (Stoner et al., 2005). One study showed that 76% of parents going through the evaluation process did not know what an IEP was (İlik, & Er, 2019). The process can be filled with unknown school personnel and unknown terminology. Previous research has shown that parents struggle with the technical language used during IEP meetings (Engel, 1991; Salas, 2004; Daugherty, 2015). It was expressed that parents would benefit from a slower-paced discussion and would like more time to speak when given access to forms and paperwork during the meeting. There is also the fear surrounding what happens if a parent speaks up. Friend and Cook (2010) found that parents may feel inadequate to help make educational decisions or fear that disagreeing with the school team members may negatively affect how their child will be treated. It can also be disheartening to parents when they feel that decisions were made for their child before the meeting. For instance, to save time, educators may preplan the IEP meeting decisions and present this to the parents (Weishaar, 2010). In turn, this causes the parent to feel as if they are there to either agree or disagree

with the proposed plan. It is not their perception that they had a say in making the plan for their child.

There is a need to help educators facilitate effective and successful IEP meetings and help parents feel more involved in the IEP decision-making process. This study is designed to build and pilot an intervention intended for IEP team members to increase parental satisfaction during IEP meetings. The intervention is called *Special Education Teams Increasing Parental Satisfaction* (SpEdTIPS). There are components intended for use before, during, and after the IEP meeting. For example, an introduction document will be sent home to parents before the meeting, including each team member's picture, title, and role involved in that child's IEP team. During the meeting, name tags will be provided, there will be an agenda set in place, each team member will have the opportunity to share their goals for and strengths of the child, information will be displayed for parents via a visual handout, and the discussion will remain solution-focused. After the meeting, case managers will follow up with parents to ensure understanding and see if any further questions have arisen.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory served as a guide for this work. This theory encompasses the idea that children are affected by several environmental factors, including family, school, community, culture, and society (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Each of these environments falls into one of four significant subsystems. The child is in the center, and each subsystem works its way from the center out while still surrounding and impacting the individual. The subsystems include microsystems (everyday interactions such as family, school, peers, etc.), mesosystems (environments that the child interacts with regularly but extend just beyond immediate, such as after school activities, neighborhood, religious affiliation, etc.), exosystems (these environments do not interact with the child directly but

rather are extensions of the other two subsystems, such as economics, politics, education system, government, etc.), and macrosystems (overarching beliefs and values, such as culture ideologies, customs, laws, etc.) (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). An individual's life trajectory is impacted based on how all of these environments interact with one another.

Touching the center circle (the individual) is the microsystems, where the home and school environment would fall. Danforth et al. (1990) would argue that parent and family interactions are the most critical component of the microsystem. Under the basis of this theory, parent involvement in education will be highly impactful to the child. The importance of parents being fully involved, understanding the IEP process, and feeling like their input is valued in decision-making will be critical in building a stronger partnership between home and school. Having an effective home-school collaboration has shown to have many positive benefits, including higher academic achievement for students (Fan & Chen, 2001), a decrease in behavioral problems (Fox, Dunlap, & Cushing, 2002), increased student attendance (Sheldon & Epstein, 2004), and having a more positive school climate (Lohmann, Hathcote, & Boothe, 2018). Parental involvement has not always been encouraged or viewed as a positive addition to children's education. The first program to emphasize the value of individual parent participation, rather than parent representatives speaking for the group's good, was Head Start (Seginer, 2006). This went against leading scholars who believed that lower-class parents being involved in education would recreate the harsh home environment and cycle that the school was trying to break the children of (Zigler & Muenchow, 1992). As research continued to grow in support of parent involvement within the academic world, more programs started to encourage similar experiences (Raikes & Love, 2002). Children can

witness collaborating relationships between parents and teachers (Ford, Follmer, & Litz, 1998), and parents are more involved in school activities (Simon, 2004).

A second theory driving the creation of this intervention is Mezirow's Transformative Learning theory (Mezirow, 1997). This theory suggests that learners are faced with a dilemma when prior knowledge and experiences do not fit in their frame of reference, causing a trigger of resistance (Mezirow, 1997). For example, if a parent has had negative interactions with the child's teacher before the meeting, they could enter the meeting with a defensive mindset. Or, if a school psychologist has discussed data in the past with families and they feel that it was not received well, the school psychologist could think that it is best to just skim over the data portion. Both parties, parents, and educators, approach the IEP meeting with views that influence their thoughts and perceptions. Some biases come along with these views, hindering how these team members interact with one another (Feuerstein, 2000). Hopefully, parents and educators can engage in more positive interactions by challenging past knowledge and experiences with a new approach to IEP meetings.

A unique skill set is needed to facilitate and navigate various personalities of team members, student needs, and the essential component of parental involvement (Beck & DeSutter, 2020). Following an iterative process, The SpEdTIPS intervention was developed in conjunction with parents and educators following receiving feedback from parents. It is anticipated that the following components of the intervention will include introductions, name tags, and following an agenda that all support a strength-based planning approach (Weishaar, 2010). These components can address the concern of being unsure of each team member's involvement, knowing who everyone at the meeting is, and no topics being addressed coming as a surprise. The next component, stating the child's goals and strengths,



will support a solution-focused mindset (Agoratur, 2019). This will allow each team member to start the meeting feeling able to talk and that their voice matters. It also starts the session off positively and propels the team to want to discuss how they can use those strengths to reach the child's goals. Using visual supports to display data will also encourage a solution-focused mindset and help the team stay on task. Beck and DeSutter (2020) found that having data in the meetings enabled them to focus the conversation and answer questions that parents might have. Furthering incorporating a visual component, parents will have the opportunity to take in information in two formats, auditory and visually, hopefully increasing comprehension. The final element of the intervention will support continued communication with parents beyond just the one day of the meeting. Overall, communication between families and case managers is a continued challenge for collaboration between both parties. Research shows that families often wish they were provided with more information and had more consistent contact with the IEP team (Duffy-Sherr, 2021). By including this component, the hope is that parents will feel secure in knowing they were heard during the meeting and to help ensure that the team will follow through with agreed-upon goals. The creation of this intervention will provide a foundation for how IEP teams can be positive, effective, and productive.

The purpose of this study is help IEP teams engage in action steps to increase parental satisfaction in IEP meetings. Following the development of the SpEdTIPS intervention, IEP teams will use the intervention. The following research questions will be examined:

- Research Question 1a: Does parental knowledge of the IEP process positively increase from pre- to post-intervention?

- Research Question 1b: Does parental satisfaction with the IEP meetings positively increase from pre- to post-intervention?
- Research Question 1c: Do parents' perceptions of home-school partnerships positively improve pre- to post-intervention?
- Research Question 2a: Does educators' knowledge of the IEP process positively increase from pre- to post-intervention?
- Research Question 2b: Does educators' satisfaction of IEP meetings positively increase from pre- to post-intervention?
- Research Question 2c: Do educators' perceptions of home-school partnerships positively improve from pre- to post-intervention?
- Research Question 3: Do IEP team members view the intervention as helpful, feasible, and important?

It is hypothesized that parents' and educators' knowledge and satisfaction of the IEP meetings and perceptions of home-school partnerships will positively improve from pre- to post-intervention. Also hypothesized is that case managers will view the SpEdTIPS intervention as helpful, feasible, and essential.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Individualized Education Plan (IEP)**

An IEP is an education plan designed to help individualize instruction for children identified with disabilities (Lo, 2012). The IEP is constructed with the help of educators, parents, and students themselves. This process was first introduced in 1975 as a way for the law to require schools to make modifications and accommodations for students who had physical, mental, or learning disabilities. Over the years, the law has been modified to its most recent version, which falls under Public Law 108-446, known as the IDEA amendment, to emphasize accountability in assessment (Yell & Shriner, 1997). The responsibilities of an IEP have shifted over the years. In the early years, this program was the sole responsibility of the special education teacher. More recently, congress agreed that the IEP should be a priority for a team or committee, including parents and general education teachers (Lee-Tarver, 2006). Parents started being viewed as IEP team members in 1975 under the Education of all Handicapped Children's Act (EAHCA) (Weishaar, 2010). This began the legal mandate of notifying parents if the school believed a student had a disability and including parents in the IEP meetings (Clune & Van Pelt, 1985). This was reemphasized in 1997 when parents began increasing their participation in the evaluation process. In 2004 when transitions services were added to the IEP, parents were expected to offer input about post-school activities (Weishaar, 2010). The IDEA amendment holds school districts accountable for every child's right to a "free and appropriate education" through their IEP (Huefner, 2000). Children engaging in special education evaluations are at a pivotal point in their academic careers. They are experiencing challenges in their education that need to be

addressed as soon as possible to mitigate adverse long-term effects. Their future success needs to have all of the most important adults in their lives be involved in the process.

There are essentially ten steps that form the IEP process. These include (1) a child is identified as possibly needing special education services, (2) the child is being evaluated, (3) special education services eligibility being determined, (4) the child is found to need services, (5) an IEP meeting is scheduled, (6) during the IEP meeting goals being written, (7) decided upon services to be provided, (8) progress towards goals being monitored, (9) IEP is reviewed annually, and (10) child being reevaluated every three years (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Much more detail goes into each step, and some parents may feel unsure where to begin educating themselves on this tedious process. Research has found that after IEP meetings, many parents do not read or even reference the IEP document because of the difficulty in interpreting and understanding the form. (Zeitlin & Curcic, 2014).

### **Perceived Parent Perspective on IEP Process**

Under the IDEA, parents must be included in the decisions made regarding a child's IEP and viewed as equal partners in the process (Landmark & Zhang, 2013). Research has found that parents have numerous concerns regarding their participation in IEP meetings, impacting their overall perception of school and their student's special education. One study found that parents felt unable to provide input before the meeting because no information was provided (Tucker & Schwartz, 2013). Parents entering a meeting with no framework of what will take place can leave them anxious and confused about the process and implications of the meeting. Spann, Kohler, and Soenksen (2003) found that parents believed decisions had been decided before entering the meeting. Parents feeling that they have no say in their child's education can make them feel undervalued and defensive. Further, if parents think

they have no say in the process, this insinuates a lack of equal partnership between home and school.

Researchers found another concerning information was that parents have felt pressured into signing IEP documents without fully understanding what it means (Valle & Aponte, 2002). When asked what IEP is, another study found that more than half of the parents did not know (İlik & Er, 2019). One parent stated, “I don’t know what it means exactly, but I think it is a document sent by the school for me to sign” (İlik, & Er, 2019, p. 78). Without knowledge regarding what the documentation entails, parents freely sign legally binding contracts with the schools regarding their child’s education. Optimistically, all decisions will be effectively communicated and will benefit the child, however potentially students might not be receiving sufficient services to best meet their diverse needs. Furthering cause of concern, 80% of parents in one study found that they did not believe that the goals in the IEP would meet the needs of their child (İlik & Er, 2019). It should be the right of parents to know what is going on with their child. Children and Chambers (2005) found similar results when half of the families in their study indicated they experienced pressure in agreeing with an already determined decision placement. These noncollaborative actions are harmful to home-school partnerships. In any partnership, individuals want to feel like they are equals and contribute to decisions. Improving home-school partnerships is imperative and may lead to better outcomes for children.

### **Home-School Collaboration**

Having communication and collaboration between the adults that children spend most of their time with, parents and teachers, is essential for a child’s academic success. Cowan, Swearer Napolitano, and Sheridan (2004) define home-school collaboration as “a reciprocal

dynamic process that occurs between at least one parent (or guardian) and at least one individual within the school system (e.g., educators, administrators, psychologists) who share in decision making regarding mutually determined goals and solutions related to a student for whom all parties share interest and responsibility” (p. 201).

There are many potential benefits to home-school collaboration—one of them being increased communication. When parents discuss the child’s behavior at home and teachers discuss the child’s behavior at school, this allows for a better understanding across settings (Cowan, Swearer Napolitano, & Sheridan, 2004). This concept builds right into our ecological theory framework by understanding that multiple environments impact children’s overall functioning. This communication between home and school can also create a sense of joint ownership and both parents and educators being mutually invested in helping the child reach their goals. Hypothetically, when parents and teachers are equally invested in helping a child reach their academic, social, and behavioral goals, cultivating a successful relationship should be a top priority. However, often executing this reciprocated relationship between parents and teachers is challenging.

While there are numerous benefits of home-school collaboration, there are challenges that parents and teachers face when trying to establish a partnership. Research has found that teachers and parents are often unclear about what role each wishes to play in students’ education (Epstein & Sanders, 2000). Areas that prompt uncertainty includes: Teachers are unaware of parents’ goals for their children, how parents plan to help with academics, how involved parents wish to be in school, and what information parents find most essential to help their children succeed. It is unclear if teachers are not seeking out this information, are not trained to prompt for this information, or if parents do not feel the need to answer these

critical questions. Parents are also unclear on things, such as resources and opportunities available to help their child, how the school and education system plan to improve or change over time, what teachers' expectations and goals are for their child, and, one of the most important, the academic goals set forth by curriculums (Epstein & Sanders, 2000). When examining home-school collaboration, a key factor is having parents and teachers on the same team. Each team member needs to know and find an agreement on the child's goals and expectations. Teachers need to explain to parents what knowledge is expected at specific grade levels and parents need to explain to the teacher how they plan on assisting in the home. When roles are undefined, it makes it difficult to know what questions to ask and how involved each party should be with one another.

### **Socioeconomic Status and Home-School Collaboration**

When parent involvement first took off in the 1990s, there were hesitations and pushback from lower class and working families due to the added responsibility (Cullingford & Morrison, 1999; Lareau & Shumar, 1996). Research states that overall, families with higher socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds are more likely to be involved in schooling when compared to families of low SES backgrounds (Hill & Taylor, 2004). It has also been found that parents who have students that qualify for free and reduced lunch (FRL) also tend to show lower levels of family-school engagement (Smith et al., 2019). Many structural factors can decrease involvement, such as lack of resources, parents having multiple jobs or nonflexible work schedules, transportation issues, and even higher stress levels due to living in poverty (Malone, 2017). Perceptual barriers can also play a part, such as prior negative encounters with the school, feelings of discrimination, and being unsure of their involvement (Herman et al., 2014). With all of these stressors, the added challenge of being involved in

their children's academics could seem overwhelming and daunting to parents. It could be incredibly overwhelming when a child needs special education services. The child will need even more support; parents will have to navigate a complex system, be involved in continuous meetings, and comprehend their child's progress.

Schools in impoverished areas also struggle due to higher classroom numbers, fewer teachers/support staff, larger caseloads, and high teacher turnover rates (Simon & Johnson, 2015). These factors relate to the ecological theory that children are affected by several environmental factors, including family and community (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). This provides evidence for schools' critical need to provide adequate support and communication to families. Research has found that families with lower SES typically only get involved if schools initiate and promote the partnership (Malone, 2017). Taking the burden off initiating communication of families could build positive home-school relationships and provide support to help elevate some of the challenges these families face. Schools can encourage positive parenting behaviors by initiating contact with families, which act as defensive variables against adverse impacts related to low SES (Green et al., 2007).

### **Home-School Partnerships**

A more modern description of parents' involvement within the school setting is home-school partnerships. A partnership implies that parents play a significant role in the education team (Cowan, Swearer Napolitano, & Sheridan, 2004). The primary difference between home-school collaboration and home-school partnerships is that collaboration implies a short-term process to reach a specific goal. Partnerships suggest an ever-changing and ever-evolving relationship between parents and school personnel to best help children (Christenson, 2004). These partnerships develop over time and across multiple interactions.



Having a partnership between parents and schools helps both parties feel comfortable sharing their expertise and opinions. It is more than just reaching one goal for one student. Home-school partnerships are about improving the education system to help benefit all students. There can be an entire community of support if every parent is invested in the school and every educator is invested in each family.

Research shows empirically tested models of family-school partnerships such as the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997, 2005) framework that examines specific predictors of parental involvement. These predictors include parents' motivational beliefs about their involvement, perceptions of invitations to participation from others, and perceived life context variables. These constructs were examined to determine how effective they were in predicting parental involvement. Parents from socioeconomically and ethnically diverse public schools showed that this model provides a valuable framework for understanding the predictors of home-school partnerships (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007). There are also recommendations for best practices involving parenting engagement for general school populations (Epstein & Sanders, 2000; Epstein, 2004) and for parents of students involved in the special education system (Frew et al., 2013). There is an abundant number of strategies available to educators on how to increase parent involvement and effectively engage in home-school partnerships. Epstein (2001) recommended the following methods as the most effective steps to parent involvement, including: (1) collaborating to create a nurturing home environment, (2) establishing communication between home and school, (3) assisting in the classroom and at the school, (4) engaging in some type of learning while at home, (5) including families as decision-makers in the school, and (6) connecting families with the community. Taking part in all of these strategies has

resulted in students attending school more (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002), behavior problems decreasing (Vakalahi, 2001), and a lower percentage of student drop-outs (Barnard, 2003), and increased student achievement (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). Parent involvement can look other ways as well. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) and Brandon and Brown (2009) provide a minimum of 30 strategies each. An abundance of parent involvement strategies to share with schools and families sounds ideal. Still, the problem with too many options is that school administrators may not know which methods would be most beneficial for their specific parent populations. Research has shown that investing in too many strategies can lead to poor implementation and failure to achieve desired goals (McChesney, Covey, & Huling, 2012). When attempting to engage in many systems, fidelity can be lost.

The benefits of home-school partnerships on children's academic achievement have been examined. There are some inconsistencies in whether parental involvement is correlated with academic achievement within the literature. A big part of this could be how parental involvement is defined. Some researchers examine how parents are included in anything school-related such as communication between home and school, parents' participation in school activities, parents monitoring learning in the home environment, and parents being involved in school-based decisions (Epstein, 1987). In contrast, other researchers examine only the actions parents take outside of the school day (Christenson, Rounds, & Gorney, 1992). A recent meta-analysis concluded that parent involvement, meaning any direct interaction with children and a school-related activity, does have a significant positive effect on children's global academic achievement (Nye, Turner, & Schwartz, 2006). The decided upon outcome measure could also be playing a part in the inconsistencies in the research. A previous meta-analysis found a stronger relationship between parental involvement and

academic achievement if measured globally, such as grade point average, rather than if it was measured by subject, such as math grade (Fan & Chen, 2001). These results could also vary by the subject that was examined. Nye, Turner, and Schwartz (2006) found that parent involvement positively impacted reading achievement; however, it had no significance on math achievement. There are essential variables that many of these studies are failing to take into account, and that is the differences in parent background characteristics, such as SES, education, and training (Reynolds, Weissberg, & Kaspro, 1992) and academic expectations (Fan & Chen, 2001). Academics will be impacted if parents have school expectations, such as grades, after-school activity involvement, graduation, etc., rather than if parents are simply supervising schoolwork at home. Nonetheless, parents being involved in their child's schooling does have a significant, positive effect.

In theory, home-school partnerships sound good, but they are often challenging to implement (Lau & Ng, 2019). There are many reasons for this being challenging, including parents being unresponsive because of a lack of time and resources, teachers being unsure of how much parents wish to be involved, parents being unclear of where the line draws between assisting their child and their child's self-sufficiency, teachers having large numbers of students, etc. A good partnership should start from the highest position and work its way down. Sanders (2014) suggested that for families and community members to believe in partnerships with schools, it needs to start with the principal. For example, one study explored a systems approach and found that a district that implemented "first week of school" activities for parents and students to be a part of positively influenced their collaborative efforts with families (Sanders, 2014). This facilitates a foundation for relationships between schools and families and allows positive interactions. By the school

principal promoting partnerships, it can help both parents and teachers feel like they have someone to turn to for support during difficult times.

A strong relationship and building a partnership between home and school allows joint ownership of the child's education (Christenson, 2004). Both parties can voice their opinions and concerns and have a say in the actions that should take place. They can come together to find a solution and support one another throughout the process. This effective home-school partnership will help create more positive attitudes and expectations due to each understanding of one another's point of view. Epstein (1985) found that parents rate teachers higher when an effort is made to involve them. For instance, parents wish they had more specific information on how to support their children in the home setting (Lynch, 2021). Parents often do not know activities that would encourage academic learning, so teachers providing those structured projects or games could be very beneficial to parents in making them feel successful in contributing to their child's education.

One way to promote home-school partnerships is for schools to follow the four A's model, which includes approach, attitudes, atmosphere, and actions. Researchers found that these four essential components are needed to build meaningful partnerships between home and school (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). The approach examines how schools interact with families and consider the strengths that parents and teachers bring to the table to benefit the child. The approach component is about educators valuing families' opinions and their unique knowledge about the child. The attitude component considers how families and schools view and perceive one another. Both parties know that a child's education is the team's responsibility, including both parents and educators, and that the team needs to use each other's strengths to benefit the child. A positive attitude is knowing that each team

member brings something important to the table and that everyone's input is needed to best serve the child's needs. Atmosphere examines how families and schools interact with one another in building a child's healthy environment. The atmosphere needs to be positive and inviting from both sides to facilitate open communication and shared decision-making. The final component of the four A's model in action. Action embodies the idea that the relationship between home and school needs to be long-term. Behaviors have to show that each party wants to be involved, and the actions taken will help build the relationship over time. IEP meetings that infuse the four A's into the process will be more productive and engaging to parents.

### **Current Study**

Past literature demonstrates a need for a partnership between parents and educators, especially within a pivotal moment of a child's educational career. Goldman and Burke (2017) emphasized the need for training programs and interventions that target other IEP members rather than parents. In a meta-analysis that examined studies in which parent training programs were used to increase parent involvement and satisfaction in IEP meetings, results showed no significant findings (Goldman & Burke, 2017). Parents who have children with disabilities may experience additional stressors (Hauser-Cram, Warfield, Shonkoff, & Krauss, 2001), may encounter different relationships when partnering with the school (Engel, 1991), and must learn to navigate the special education system (Stoner et al., 2005). It is also essential to consider families with cultural differences and the additional challenges when navigating the special education system. Educators need to relate their own beliefs to the families they interact with, identify the differences, and foster an IEP environment (Duffy-Sherr, 2021). There is also a perceived power dynamic when parents involve themselves in

school discussions and decision-making processes. Parents may not feel comfortable stating their genuine opinions if the responsibility of involvement in the IEP process is placed on them (Goldman & Burke, 2017).

It also highlights a need for clear guidelines for IEP meetings to be created, put in place, and utilized by educators. The current study will examine how essential evidence-based components can improve parents' and educators' views and perceptions of the IEP process while enhancing the relationship between parents and school staff. IEP meetings will emphasize open communication, exchanging ideas, and shared decision-making. This will promote involvement and foster feelings of value in future educational evaluations. The following research questions were examined:

- Research Question 1a: Does parental knowledge of the IEP process positively increase from pre to post-intervention?
- Research Question 1b: Does parental satisfaction with the IEP meetings positively increase from pre to post-intervention?
- Research Question 1c: Do parents' perceptions of home-school partnerships positively improve pre- to post-intervention?
- Research Question 2a: Does educators' knowledge of the IEP process positively increase from pre to post-intervention?
- Research Question 2b: Does educators' satisfaction with IEP meetings positively increase from pre to post-intervention?
- Research Question 2c: Do educators' perceptions of home-school partnerships positively improve pre- to post-intervention?

- Research Question 3: Do IEP team members view the intervention as helpful, feasible, and essential?

It is hypothesized that parents' and educators' knowledge and satisfaction of the IEP meetings and perceptions of home-school partnerships will positively improve from pre- to post-intervention. Also hypothesized is that case managers will view the SpEdTIPS intervention as helpful, feasible, and essential.

## **Chapter III**

### **Method**

#### **Research Design**

This study utilized a mixed method pilot design to develop through an iterative process the the SpEdTIPS intervention. Feedback from parents of students with IEPs and experts in special education were utilized to create and adapt intervention materials. Once developed, the intervention was piloted across a small number of IEP meetings. Pre and post measures were gathered from the parents and the case managers involved in the IEP meetings. The following provides a summary of each phase of the study.

#### **Phase 1- Intervention Development**

##### **Introduction**

Research shows us that even with parents being legally mandated team members, their overall involvement in IEP meetings is low (Martin et al., 2006). This is especially concerning with the high level of support needed for students with disabilities. Per a meta-analysis on the effectiveness of increasing parent involvement in special education, there is currently no intervention that focuses solely on the action steps initiated by the school (Goldman & Burke, 2017). With that being said, it was essential to gather parents' perspectives on what they believed would be practical steps that the school could take to improve their experiences with IEP meetings.

##### **Participants**

**Parent Focus Groups.** Parents were recruited to participate in the study via social media to share their experiences in IEP meetings and contribute ideas to potential intervention components. A total of 13 parents were involved across 5 focus groups.



Participants primarily identified as female (85%), with 15% identifying as male. 8 of the participants identified as White and 5 participants identified as Black. Inclusion criteria included having a child with an IEP and having to have attended an IEP meeting within the last 5 years.

**Expert Panel Focus Group.** Expert panel members were recruited to participate in the study to share their experiences with parents in IEP meetings and provide feedback on suggested intervention component ideas. Based on their qualifications and past experiences with IEP meetings, panel members were selected. A total of 3-panel members were selected, all identifying as female (100%), and 2 participants identifying as White and 1 identifying as Black. Panel members included an associate professor in school psychology who focuses her research on family engagement methods in schools, a special education department chair with a background in speech-language pathologist in title 1 schools, and a special education director with a background in education administration and leadership.

## **Methods**

Once phase 1 participants were recruited using convenience sampling (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014), the primary investigator (PI) conducted a one-hour focus group via Zoom that included different probes targeting the discussion of parents' experiences with IEP meetings, feelings throughout the IEP process, and action steps they believed the school could take before, during, and after an IEP meeting in hopes to improve parents' satisfaction. Participants were given multiple meeting days and times and chose the one that worked best for their schedule. Focus group sizes ranged from 2-to 5 participants.

## **Focus Group Protocol**

Questions and probes were designed to initiate group discussion (Krueger & Casey, 2009) and allow the PI flexibility to expand on relevant points made by participants (Wong, 2008). For instance, when a parent was discussing that an ideal IEP meeting included educators saying positive things about their child when prompted to expand on that answer, the parent continued stating, “that despite all the problems, the school still thinks he is a good kid, and they are still willing to work with him.” The questions and probes were created to examine whether this sample of parents had similar experiences with IEP meetings to past literature and to gather ideas for specific components to include in the intervention. See appendices A and B for protocol questions.

## **Data Analysis**

Content analysis was used to analyze focus group data. “The content analysis aims to organize similarities in the data by creating themes and concepts, and to interpret meaning from those” (İlik & Er, 2019, p. 78). Themes and concepts included parents’ experiences and feelings with IEP meetings and parents’ ideas for action steps before, during, and after IEP meetings to increase their satisfaction. Focus group participants were asked to share their experiences with IEP meetings that they perceived as successful and unsuccessful. Parents expressed their feelings throughout the IEP meetings and expert panel members expressed their perceptions of parents’ feelings during the meetings. Participants then shared thoughts and ideas of action steps that the school could do to increase parent satisfaction in IEP meetings. The ideas from parents emerged from either positive past experiences or things that parents wish would have gone differently. Expert panel members shared their knowledge on past literature they had reviewed, their own research results, and their own experiences

participating in IEP meetings. All of the information discussed and shared from participants was then analyzed to determine components that would increase parent satisfaction and would be feasible for case managers to implement.

## **Phase 2- Pilot Intervention**

### **Introduction**

There is a clear need for novel interventions that target increasing parent participation and satisfaction in IEP meetings (Goldman & Burke, 2017). Putting the responsibility of taking additional action steps, such as parent training on IEP processes and participation, sending informational packets home, or having an additional pre-meeting to attend, have all shown to have no impact on increasing parent involvement in IEP meetings (Blietz, 1988; Hirsh, 2004; Jones & Gansle, 2010). Attempting to put the responsibility on the school to engage in action steps seems to be the only other option. Although the IEP meeting is on a single day, parent participation and input need to extend beyond that. The focus of this study is for the educators in charge of a student's IEP, the case manager, to attempt parent involvement before, during, and after the IEP meeting itself to increase parent satisfaction with the IEP process.

### **Participants**

**Parents.** Families were recruited through an elementary school in the Midwest. The school district predominantly serves Black (41%), White (25.8%), and Hispanic (22.8%) students. All students within the school receive FRL. Parents who have a child with an IEP and were currently assigned a case manager who consents to the study were asked to participate. Seven parents agreed to participate, primarily identifying as female (86%), with 14% identifying as male. Parents primarily identified as White (71%), while one participant

identified as Hispanic and another as Black. All parents participating identified themselves as the student's parent, and their student's disabilities varied. Student disabilities included Speech Impairment (42%), Autism (28%), Language Impairment (14%), and Specific Learning Disability (14%).

**Case Managers.** Case managers from the same elementary school were recruited and consented. A total of 4 case managers agreed to participate, all identifying as White females.

### **Procedures**

An intervention was designed, known as SpEdTIPS (*Special Education Teams Increasing Parental Satisfaction*), based on evidenced-based components and information gathered from parent and expert panel focus groups facilitated by the PI. The intervention was anticipated to improve parent satisfaction in IEP meetings by integrating key aspects that parents felt necessary to have a positive experience with the IEP process and improve home-school partnerships by continued collaboration before, during, and after the IEP meeting.

The intervention includes research-based and parent-suggested components that were be implemented before, during, and post IEP meetings. The specially designed intervention was being implemented by case managers in a title one school. Once recruited and agreeing to participate by signing a consent form, case managers attended a one-hour facilitation training with the PI on facilitation techniques and how to implement intervention steps. The one-hour training was inspired by a focus group parent participant who suggested that case managers needed "more training around soft skills in meetings" such as empathetic listening and validating parents' feelings. Research shows that educator instruction programs lack training on the most effective and efficient ways to foster positive relationships with parents (Walker & Dotger, 2012), and step-by-step methods to convey critical information during

parent collaboration meetings (İlik, & Sarı, 2017). The training included information on current research in parent participation in IEP meetings, reframing, managing difficult situations, and using open-ended questions, affirmations, reflective listening, and summarizing (OARS) (Lundahl et al., 2019).

After discussing facilitation techniques, the training continued by reviewing the 12 action steps outlined in the SpEdTIPS manual. All implementation steps are located in a SpEdTIPS manual and each case manager was provided an electronic copy. After completing the training, case managers then notified the PI of any IEP meetings they had scheduled within the data collection time frame, approximately two months (March 2022-April 2022). For any IEP meetings the case managers had planned during the data collection time frame, a letter was sent home or presented at the IEP meeting to those parents, along with a consent form for participation in the study. Once consent had been obtained, case managers began implementing the intervention components as detailed in the manual in the appropriate timeline schedule.

A control group was attempted. The PI reached out to 15 case managers from other elementary schools within the school district who agreed to participate in the study. Out of 15, only 3 replied and attended a 15-minute data collection meeting with the PI. Once consenting to participate, the control group case managers notified the PI of any IEP meetings they had scheduled during the data collection window. And although 6 meetings were scheduled between the 3 case managers, only one participant was able to collect parent data. Reasons for this verifying from parents not consenting, having to reschedule the IEP meetings outside the data collection timeframe, or parents not attending the IEP meeting.

For participation in the study, case managers in the treatment group received a one-time \$50 gift card upon completing all the scheduled IEP meetings. Case managers in the control group who were able to complete data collection received a \$25 gift card. Parents who participated in the study had the opportunity to earn \$15 in gift cards, \$5 for the pre-assessment completed before the IEP meeting, and \$10 for the post-assessment completed after the IEP meeting. The PI attended one IEP meeting to observe.

**Intervention Components.** The SpEdTIPS intervention included 12 steps that happened during the IEP process. There were four pre-meeting steps, six meeting steps, and two post-meeting steps. The intervention components’ descriptions are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

*SpEdTIPS Intervention Components*

Intervention Components	Description
Pre-Meeting	
Facilitation Techniques Training Take-Aways	Training to learn facilitation strategies is needed for IEP meetings due to their unique composition of team members, their goal of meeting student needs, and the requirement of parent involvement.
Communication home before meeting	There are several reasons why communicating with a parent before an IEP meeting is beneficial. This component includes a list of talking points when corresponding before the IEP meeting.
IEP Team Introduction Sheet sent home	The IEP Team Member introduction sheet will have a picture of each member of the IEP team for that student and include that team member’s name, title, the role they will play in that child’s case, and their contact information.
Pre-Collaboration Meeting with IEP Team School Members ( <i>optional</i> )	A collaboration meeting with IEP team school members to verify the agenda, gather and distribute assessment data, and address any potential concerns that they believe may arise in the upcoming meeting.
During Meeting	
Name Tags	Providing name tags to each individual at the IEP meeting is a way to ensure that parents feel

Agenda	<p>welcomed and comfortable the minute they enter the space.</p> <p>Determine what specific topics are required to discuss and think about if there are any other areas that you would like to bring forward to the team. Create a list of items that will need to be discussed at the IEP meeting.</p>
Visual Aids	<p>Visual charting, such as electronic projection (e.g., PowerPoint), laminated charts, or writing in real-time on a large easel, are effective strategies that can allow IEP team members to collaboratively view the same material (Mueller &amp; Vick, 2019, p. 76).</p>
Strengths of a Student	<p>Discussion of a student's areas of strength. It is crucial for all team members to be focusing on the positives of the student and try to figure out how we can use their strengths to improve their areas of growth.</p>
Solution-Oriented Discussion	<p>Sticking to the agenda topics and guiding the direction of the conversation in a positive light will be crucial. Parents report that it is stressful to hear about their child's weaknesses and deficits (Goldman &amp; Burke, 2017), and educators' word choices can impact those feelings. This component includes several ways in which you can keep the conversation solution-oriented.</p>
Avoid Technical Jargon	<p>Be conscious of each word and phrase you choose to use when explaining concepts to the parents. It is important to remember that parents do not encounter educational terms as educators do.</p>
Post Meeting	
Post Meeting Follow Up	<p>Follow up with the parent after an IEP meeting. This is essential in starting that student's program with success and building a collaborative home-school partnership.</p>
Continued Communication	<p>Determine how often and in what format you can continue communication with the parent. We want this IEP process to be a chance to help build and cultivate a positive, trusting, and lasting relationship between the school and parents.</p>

## Measures

Quantitative measures were created by examining the literature on parents' knowledge of the IEP process, satisfaction with the IEP meeting, and perceptions of home-school partnership (Fish, 2008; Martin et al.; 2006, İlik & Er, 2019). Fish (2008) used interview questions created "by using literature review research on parents' perceptions of IEP meetings, experiences of IEP meetings by the researcher, and findings from a previous case study researching parents' perceptions of students with autism toward IEP meetings (Fish, 2006)." (p. 9). Martin et al.'s (2006) survey examined the subscales of prior knowledge (coefficient alpha = .68), transition issues (coefficient alpha = .82), participants' meeting behaviors (coefficient alpha = .83), and perceptions of the meeting (coefficient alpha = .84), with a total coefficient alpha of .91 for adult participants. Results indicate strong reliability and that survey questions within each construct are closely related. İlik and Er (2019) also interviewed their participants and had a group of experts examine their interview questions in a draft to ensure internal validity. Statements were created by completing a literature review and determining that the following three studies' constructs most closely related to the present study (Fish, 2008; Martin et al.; 2006, İlik & Er, 2019).

A pre-assessment survey was completed by both parents and case managers before each IEP meeting took place, and a post-assessment survey after the IEP concluded. To create these measures, each construct from the original surveys was examined and it was determined which statements were relevant for the current study and any additional comments that the PI was attempting to capture, specifically in terms of the desired outcomes.



**Parent’s perception of the IEP process.** The *Parental Perception of IEP Meetings* was developed and derived from Fish (2008), İlik & Er (2019), and Martin et al. (2006). A total of 36 items evaluated parents’ knowledge of the IEP process, satisfaction with the meeting and outcomes, and perceptions of home-school partnerships. The items were scored on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) for how much the parents agreed with the statement. 11 items were focusing on parents’ knowledge of the IEP process. For example, “I know the purpose of an IEP” was asked within this section. It was decided to include parental knowledge due to research suggesting that understanding of the IEP process may play a factor in parent satisfaction (Daughtery, 2015). 15 items focused on parental satisfaction of the IEP meeting. For example, “My input was valued” and “Overall, I had a positive experience at my child’s IEP meeting.” Finally, ten items focused on home-school partnerships. Such as, “I am satisfied with the amount of contact between the school and us,” “I am treated with respect by my child’s educators and administrators,” and “A strong partnership between home and school is essential for my child’s success in school.”

Higher scores indicate more knowledge, increased satisfaction, and positive home-school partnerships for all sections. For this questionnaire, 4 items were reversed scored to account for negatively worded questions. For example, “I was confused at this meeting” was reversed score. The pre-assessment and post-assessment measures are very similar in questions asked, with a minor difference being the verb tense. The pre-assessment measure does ask for statements regarding prior meeting contact and communication and expectations coming into the IEP meeting, which are removed (9 items) for the post-assessment measure as those answers will not change. The post-assessment measure has an additional eight

questions regarding the parents' satisfaction with IEP outcomes and seven questions regarding intervention fidelity. In addition, four demographic questions were asked in the pre-assessment to determine participants' gender, race, students' current disability category, and parents' relationship to the student. See Appendices C and D for all items.

**Educators' perception of the IEP process.** The *Educator Perception of IEP Meetings* was developed and derived from Fish (2008), İlik & Er (2019), and Martin et al (2006) will be given pre and post IEP meetings. The items were scored on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) for how much the case managers agreed with the statement. 13 items focused on parents' knowledge of the IEP process. For example, "Parents/guardians know-how goals for an IEP are determined" was asked within this section. 13 items focused on parental satisfaction of the IEP meeting. For example, "Parents/guardians feel comfortable asking questions in IEP meetings" and "Overall, parents/guardians had a positive experience at their child's IEP meeting." Finally, ten items focused on home-school partnerships. Such as "Parents/guardians are comfortable contacting the school with concerns," "Parents/guardians trust their child's educators," and "A strong partnership between home and school is essential for the student's success in school."

Similar to the parental perception measure, higher scores indicate more knowledge, increased satisfaction, and positive home-school partnerships. 3 of the items were reversed scored for this questionnaire to account for negatively worded questions. For example, "Parents/guardians believe that every child's IEP is the same" was reversed score. The pre-assessment and post-assessment measures are very similar in questions asked, with a minor difference being the verb tense. The pre-assessment measure does ask for statements regarding prior meeting contact and communication and expectations coming into the IEP

meeting, which are removed (10 items) for the post-assessment measure as those answers will not change. The post-assessment measure has an additional ten questions regarding the parents' satisfaction with IEP outcomes as well. Outcomes reviewed parents' perceptions on decisions determined at the meaning and how those decisions were made. There were 36 questions asked on the pre-assessment measure and 40 questions asked on the post-assessment measure. See Appendices E and F for all items.

**Fidelity.** In addition to examining IEP outcomes, the post-assessment measure has an additional 11 questions regarding intervention fidelity. These fidelity questions captured the extent to which case managers were engaging in individual intervention components. Fidelity statements matched the post assessment structure and used a Likert scale. The items were scored on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), determining if the action step was carried out or not. Both parents and case managers completed the fidelity items survey questions, the only difference being that case managers knew the intended action steps, whereas parents did not. Higher scores indicated stronger fidelity.

**Social Validity Measure.** A social validity measure was developed to measure the impact of intervention goals and procedures. All case managers completed the social validity measure at the end of the data collection window once all IEP meetings using SpEdTIPS had been completed. There were 13 questions, 11 of them scored on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) for how much the case managers agreed with the statement. Some of the questions included, "I found SpEdTIPS to be an effective intervention for increasing parental satisfaction in IEP meetings," and "I found SpEdTIPS to be feasible." There were also two open-ended questions included that asked, "What components of

SpEdTIPS did you find most helpful?” and “What suggestions do you have for improving the SpEdTIPS intervention?”

### **Data Analysis**

A series of t-tests was conducted to examine the differences from pre to post assessment for both parents and case managers. It was expected that parents’ knowledge of the IEP process and satisfaction with the IEP meeting would increase for parents who receive the SpEdTIPS intervention. It was also expected that parents would have a more positive view of the home-school partnerships post the IEP meeting due to all the intervention components completed by case managers. Descriptive analyses were used to examine how likely IEP team members would be to use the intervention in the future. It was expected that IEP teams found the intervention helpful and easy to implement.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Results**

#### **Phase 1- Intervention Development**

Themes and concepts used to integrate into the intervention included parents' experiences and feelings with IEP meetings and parents' ideas for action steps before, during, and after IEP meetings to increase their satisfaction. These were determined to be the most beneficial concepts to examine due to the investigator using the information gathered from focus groups to create additional intervention components. Parents were instructed to focus on the action steps or behaviors that the school IEP team members could engage in to avoid putting any responsibility on the parent. The first action step suggested to have the case managers engage in a facilitation training prior to facilitating their IEP meetings. Parents expressed a wish for educators to "be empathetic and not someone who just talks business." These skills include, but are not limited to, empathetic listening, reframing, incorporating strengths, deescalating conflict, and solution-focused discussion. Skills that most school psychologist learn while in their training programs, however not skills that are emphasized within teacher training programs (Walker & Dotger, 2012; Beck, & DeSutter, 2020). Another component that emerged from focus groups was the idea to send a parent communication sheet home before the meeting took place. The investigator knew the importance of connecting with families, but after the focus groups took place, it was evident that parents were craving a way to share their concerns so they could be addressed in the meeting. Throughout discussions with case managers, it also became common to hear that parents often struggle with describing their child's strengths when put on the spot in meetings. Adding the strengths section to the parent contact form allowed parents time to feel prepared

to answer that question, especially in front of individuals that they could be meeting for the first time.

For during the meeting components, the investigator wanted to target parents being able to increase their understanding of the content. Multiple parents stated that often times language used throughout the meeting did not make sense and the facilitator was going too fast. When expanding on these comments, part of the confusion came from the large number of acronyms used, thus the acronym cheat sheet to provide to parents was developed. It was suggested to send this home prior to the meeting but also have a copy for parents to reference while the meeting was taking place. Parents from focus groups also mentioned that abundance of information they were expected to take in was overwhelming, especially if they were just listening. One parent stated that she wished she would have been able to see a PowerPoint to follow along with, thus the visual aid component of SpEdTIPS emerged. The investigator wanted case managers to have flexibility and allow them to express creativity with how the information was visually resented. Finally, the last theme that continued to arise was communication. Almost every group had a parent express a desire for more communication from the case manager, especially right after the IEP meeting. It was mentioned that often times after taking time to process information from the meeting, parents have questions and if they do not reach out to the case managers first, then the questions will not be answered. It was important for case managers to discuss with the family what they wished communication would look like because every parent is different. Some may wish to be contacted weekly, whereas others may think that monthly contact is enough for them. It also depends on the level of needs of the student that may impact parents' desire for different levels of expected communication. The component that was derived from this theme was the

Continued Communication form, where case managers sent home a preference sheet to determine best methods of contact with the family and gauge their ideal amount of contact.

**Parents' Feelings.** When conducting focus groups, it was clear that there were a range of experiences and each parent disclosed positives and negatives about their interactions during the IEP process. Similar to research findings, the majority of parents described negative feelings associated with their IEP experiences. The two main feelings that continued to arise were feeling overwhelmed and confused. Parents described these emotions coming from a place of feeling like it was “us verses them” as they expressed the dynamic between parents and school team members. Parents expressed confusion with being unsure of how decisions were being made, such as minute allocation. Other feelings included being intimidated, nervous, defeated, exhausted, frustrated, disappointed, and powerless. The only positive feelings towards IEP meetings that two parents disclosed were feelings of happy and hopeful as the parent saw connections happening between home and school.

Parents believed multiple factors contributed to their negative feelings and their perception of having an unsuccessful meeting. “I did not feel prepared,” reported one parent as she described feelings of nervousness. She continued to state that she was unsure of what to expect coming into the meeting. Another theme that emerged was parents feeling that their concerns were being ignored. One parent stated, “they glossed over me,” meaning that the comments that parents were making were not being addressed. While further expanding on why parents believed this was happening, it was thought to be due to school staff biases. It was perceived by focus group participants that parents who were younger or less educated were not being taken seriously. There were also high levels of defeat described by parents. “No matter what we try next, it is not working,” stated one parent whose son received his

eligibility in first grade and is now in high school. This theme continued as another parent expressed her feelings of “still being at square one and continuing to have the same goals from year to year.” Overall, parents described feelings of confusion, frustration, and being overwhelmed throughout focus groups. It was believed that to have a successful IEP meeting, every stakeholder needed to be in attendance (i.e. related service providers), team members needed to come prepared, the meeting needed to stay child-focused, and parents needed to feel heard. To encourage these ideal meeting components would take place, parents were able to share what they believed case managers could do before, during, and after the IEP meeting.

**Action steps before the meeting.** The main component that parents suggested taking place before the IEP meeting was communication. It was expressed that it would be beneficial for parents to share their concerns with the team prior to the meeting. This would be helpful in allowing team members time to determine ways to address these parent concerns. Parents also reported that case managers explaining what to expect in the IEP meeting would be useful. This would allow parents to understand some of the unspoken school knows. For example, typically more people are listed on the notice of meeting than actually attend. Explaining to parents the process of why this is would help alleviate some of the anxiety parents might feel about the large number of people they believe they will be present at their child’s IEP meeting. Another suggestion that continued to emerge was that parents be offered a draft of the IEP prior to the meeting. This would allow parents to review the document and come to the meeting with questions. It would also help with time efficiency and allow the team to have a starting point for the conversation (Yell et al., 2013). It should also be noted that parents would have to be made aware that this is a draft, not a



finalized document and changes are likely to occur once the IEP meeting takes place. A final suggestion offered by parents in the focus groups included a pre-collaboration with school team members to discuss the students' progress before coming to the IEP table with the parent. This would allow special education teachers to elicit information from all stakeholders (i.e. general education teachers) and team members would come to the table with ideas to increase the efficiency of time.

**Action steps during the meeting.** Parents had the most ideas of what could take place during the IEP meeting to increase their satisfaction. Some ideas included general guidelines of meeting etiquette, such as allowing and encouraging every individual to contribute to the conversation, slowing the discussion down to give parents time to process the information, and checking in with parents throughout the meeting to ensure understanding, as well as to gauge how they are feeling about the decisions being made. A big theme that was presented that matches the literature, is that idea to decrease technical language (Engel, 1991; Salas, 2004; Daugherty, 2015). Technical jargon used by school team members was a main reason as to why parents felt confused throughout the meeting. A parent stated, "I wish they would explain things to us like we didn't know anything," as she described her want for case managers to simplify the language being used. In addition to decreasing technical language, parents also expressed a want for student strengths to be discussed. Experiences of hearing mainly deficits about their child's functioning contributed to their feelings of defeat and hopelessness. It was reported that hearing about things their child enjoys at school, their areas of growth, and any positive attributes that the child contributes to the classroom would help increase parents' trust in school personnel.

Another suggestion to incorporate into IEP meetings was the idea of having a visual aid for parents. Parents had the thought that people take in information differently and some of them believed they were visual learners. A visual aid could be a simplified PowerPoint, a handout that included data, or even work samples. Parents reported that a visual aid could increase their understanding as to why a suggested goal would be appropriate for their child. Having the student help make the visual aid and providing input was also recommended. One final suggestion from parents was for case managers to discuss their ideas about plan implementation. This would include a conversation about the strategy or intervention that the case managers plan on using to carry out the goals discussed. By engaging in this practice, parents would have more knowledge about skills being targeted and increase trust that the plan will be carried out as described.

**Action steps after the meeting.** The overall theme for post-meeting was communication. Parents felt that the only time a case manager reached out to them was when a concern arose, and even then, some parents wished they would had been contacted earlier before the problem got to a significant level. It was suggested that case managers have more frequent, consistent follow up with parents. Parent's desire for the frequency of follow-up varied from once a week to once a month. When asked to expand and discuss more about what continued communication would look like, parents suggested that positive communication be sent in an email or in a note home and communication about challenges or concerns be a phone call. One parent also made the point of noting that when parents and case managers are in constant communication, then it can help the student feel that the sole responsibility to improve is not only on them, rather everyone is working together as a team for the child's success. Communication was also mentioned in the context of following up

from the IEP meeting within a few days. This would allow the parent time to process all of the information provided and case managers could determine if any questions developed since the meeting. One parent also suggested that the follow up contact would be a time in which case managers could ask families, “How can we support you?”

**Expert Panel.** To engage in a successful IEP meeting, the expert panel members felt that case managers need to engage in actions before the meeting took place. Case managers need to come to the meeting prepared (i.e. having a draft ready), gather input of student strengths and parent concerns, and building a relationship with the family to encourage trust. One panel member stated, “the main thing is that everyone feels that they can have input or ask questions.” Panel members reported that they perceive parents to have a spectrum of feelings. One panel member stated, “I think a lot of parents feel intimidated and overwhelmed. There may be terms and jargon used that they do not understand. They also may feel alone as just one part of a group, knowing that the rest of the group works together on a daily basis so they feel like an outsider. I think many parents feel insecure about their ability to help a child with special needs and attending a meeting like that magnifies their insecurity so they tend to not talk as much. I also think it is frustrating for them because they sit for an hour and listen to a lot of information but it isn't information that is easy for them to apply at home to help their child. The focus of the meeting is about performance at school, but the connection to home is not always evident.” This emphasized the struggles and range of emotions that parents may feel in just a short amount of time.

Due to parents experiencing a spectrum of emotions, most often times negative, an idea emerged to include a “parent facilitator”. A school team member who is attending the IEP meeting would be assigned the role of watching the parent’s body language, checking in

with the parent on their feelings about the discussion and understanding, and connect the decisions happening at school with what the family could do in the home. This person could change from meeting to meeting, or it could be the individual who feels they have a strong connection with the family. Throughout the entirety of the focus group, it was emphasized the need for a relationship with the parents before the IEP took place. This is why reaching out to the parent prior to the meeting is so important. Parents may feel more comfortable stating and discussing their concerns with an individual rather than in a group. Case managers can then carry this over into the meeting itself. “The case manager should be familiar with the parent and be able to use that knowledge in supporting the parent to be a part of the conversation or ask questions.”

### **Phase 2- Pilot Intervention**

Information from phase 1 were incorporated into the materials developed for the SpEdTIPS intervention. During phase 2, case managers utilized the intervention and pre-post pilot data were gathered.

**Parental Knowledge.** Parents completed the *Parental Perception of IEP Meetings* to examine the level of knowledge parents have on the IEP process. The results from the pre-test ( $M = 45.50$ ,  $SD = 3.66$ ) and post-test ( $M = 45.87$ ,  $SD = 1.64$ ) on the SpEdTIPS intervention indicate that the presence of intervention components imposed by the case managers resulted in no improvement on parental knowledge of the IEP process,  $t(7) = 0.25$ ,  $p = .809$ . Specifically, parents did not report knowing more about the special education process leaving the IEP meeting than when they arrived.

Case managers completed the *Educator Perception of IEP Meetings* to examine their perceptions on parental knowledge of the IEP process. Results showed there was a significant

increase in parental knowledge as perceived by case managers at the end of the IEP meeting ( $M = 43.75$ ,  $SD = 3.33$ ) compared to the start of the IEP meeting ( $M = 53.5$ ,  $SD = 2.39$ ),  $t(7) = 7.55$ ,  $p < .001$ , after case managers engaged in the SpEdTIPS intervention. These results suggest that case managers perceive parents' knowledge of the IEP process to increase from pre to post assessment. Specifically, results suggest that when case managers engage in the SpEdTIPS intervention, parents' knowledge increases.

**Parental Satisfaction of IEP Meeting.** Parental satisfaction of the IEP meeting was also assessed. The results from the pre-test ( $M = 55.25$ ,  $SD = 6.34$ ) and post-test ( $M = 57$ ,  $SD = 4.24$ ) on the SpEdTIPS intervention indicate that the presence of intervention components imposed by the case managers resulted in no increase on parental satisfaction in IEP meetings,  $t(7) = 1.86$ ,  $p = .105$ . This suggests that with case managers implementing SpEdTIPS intervention components, parents did not report higher satisfaction at the end of the IEP meeting compared to the beginning of the meeting.

When examining case managers perceptions of parental satisfaction, there was a significant increase in parental satisfaction of the IEP meeting at the end of the meeting ( $M = 31.88$ ,  $SD = 3.18$ ) compared to the start of the IEP meeting ( $M = 42.75$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ),  $t(7) = 10.43$ ,  $p < .001$ , after case managers engaged in the SpEdTIPS intervention. These results suggest that case managers perceive parents as more satisfied with IEP meetings from pre to post assessment. Specifically, results suggest that when case managers engage in the SpEdTIPS intervention, parents' satisfaction increases.

**Parental Satisfaction of IEP Outcomes.** When reviewing parents' perceptions on the outcomes of the IEP meetings, there was an average of 4.64 (out of 5.00) rating for all IEP outcomes. This suggests that parents rated agree to strongly agree on majority of

statements that examined overall outcomes that emerged from the IEP meeting. The highest rated statement from parent participants was, “I agree with the decision made at the meeting” (M = 4.88), along with “The goals defined for my child help meet their needs” (M= 4.75), “We discussed supports that my child needs now” (M = 4.75), and “I know how I can support my child’s needs” (M = 4.75) as the top rated statements. Although parents overall agreed with every outcome statement, the two lowest rated statements were “I had a say in what the outcome should be” (M = 4.25) and “My opinion influenced the IEP outcome for my child” (M = 4.38).

Case managers’ rated parents’ perceptions of IEP outcomes as 4.85 (out of 5.00), suggesting that parents agreed to strongly agreed with every statement. Every case manager strongly agreed with 70% of the outcome statements, including “Parents/guardians had a say in what the outcome should be” (M = 5.00), “Parents/guardians agree with the decision made at the meeting” (M =5.00), “Parents/guardians were active partners in the IEP meeting” (M =5.00), and “Parents/guardians helped make decisions at the IEP meeting (M = 5.00). The two lowest rated statements by case mangers were, “The parent/guardian knows how they can support their child’s needs, (M = 4.25) and “Parents/guardians asked questions in the IEP meeting” (M = 4.38). Although parents and case managers both rated high levels of satisfaction with IEP outcomes, case managers did perceive parents’ perceptions of outcomes to be higher (M= 4.85) when compared to parents’ perceptions of outcomes (M = 4.64).

**Home-School Partnerships.** The *Parental Perception of IEP Meetings* also captured parents’ perceptions of home-school partnerships. The results from the pre-test (M = 44.38, SD = 8.02) and post-test (M = 43.25, SD = 7.69) on the SpEdTIPS intervention indicate that the presence of intervention components imposed by the case managers resulted in no

increase in the perception of home-school partnerships,  $t(7) = -0.78$ ,  $p = .462$ . Specifically, results suggest that parents did not feel more connected to the school in terms of trust, contact, and communication after the IEP meeting took place.

Case managers perception of parents' views on home-school partnerships, however, did have a significant increase at the end of the IEP meeting ( $M = 40.50$ ,  $SD = 3.3$ ) compared to the start of the IEP meeting ( $M = 45.25$ ,  $SD = 2.05$ ),  $t(7) = 6.78$ ,  $p < .001$ , after case managers engaged in the SpEdTIPS intervention. These results suggest that case managers perceive parents' views on home-school partnerships to increase from pre to post assessment. Specifically, results suggest that when case managers engaged in the SpEdTIPS intervention, they perceived home-school partnerships to increase.

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics by Scale*

	Mean	Std Dev
Parental Knowledge		
Pre-test	45.50	3.66
Post-test	45.88	1.64
Parental Satisfaction		
Pre-test	55.25	6.34
Post-test	57.00	4.24
Parental Perception of Home-School Partnerships		
Pre-test	44.38	8.02
Post-test	43.25	7.69
Educators' Perception of Parental Knowledge		
Pre-test	43.75	3.33
Post-test *	53.50	2.39
Educators' Perception of Parental Satisfaction		
Pre-test	31.88	3.18
Post-test **	42.75	1.04
Educators' Perception of Parental Views on Home-School Partnership		

Pre-test	40.50	3.30
Post-test ***	45.25	2.05

\* Pre and post test were significantly different, (t(7)= 7.55, p < .01)

\*\* Pre and post test were significantly different, (t(7)= 10.43, p < .01)

\*\*\* Pre and post test were significantly different, (t(7)= 6.78, p < .01)

**Fidelity.** Fidelity of the SpEdTIPS intervention was examined from the point of view of the parents, as well as the case managers. Parents rated 4.46 (out of 5.00) for fidelity implementation. This suggests that parents agreed to strongly agreed that case managers were engaging in the SpEdTIPS intervention components. Every parent participant strongly agreed that some type of visual was used throughout the IEP meeting (M = 5.00). Other components that were also highly rated were discussing the child’s strengths (M = 4.88) and having the conversation stay solution-focused (M = 4.75). Case managers rated fidelity 4.20 (out of 5.00), suggesting that case managers agreed to strongly agreed with every statement. Every case manager agreed or strongly agreed with 50% of the fidelity statements, including “I contact parents/guardians prior to the IEP meeting via email.” (M = 4.50), “The discussion stayed solution-focused.” (M = 5.00), “Parents/guardians understood everyone’s role that was at the meeting. (M = 4.88), and “My student’s strengths were discussed at the meeting. (M = 5.00). The two lowest rated fidelity statements by case mangers were, “Parents/guardians understand everyone’s role that is at IEP meetings,” (M = 2.75) and “Name tags were provided.” (M = 2.88). Although parents and case managers both rated high levels of fidelity implementation, not every intervention component was utilized to its full extent. This is seen by not having 100% fidelity by either parents or case managers. See Table 3 for further details.



Table 3

*Fidelity Items*

Parent	Mean	Case Manager	Mean
I was contacted prior to the IEP meeting via phone.	4.25	I contact parents/guardians prior to the IEP meeting via phone	4.50
I was contacted prior to the IEP meeting via email.	4.38	I contact parents/guardians prior to the IEP meeting via email.	4.50
I knew who was going to be present in the meeting prior to attending.	4.50	Parents/guardians know which individuals are going to be present in the IEP meeting prior to attending.	4.00
Name tags were provided.	3.38	Name tags were provided.	2.88
I understood everyone's role that was at the meeting.	4.50	Parents/guardians understood everyone's role that was at the meeting.	4.88
An agenda was followed.	4.63	An agenda was followed.	4.63
Some type of visual aid was used in the meeting to better help me understand the content (i.e. PowerPoint, handout, poster, note taking sheet etc.).	5.00	Some type of visual aid was used in the meeting to better help parents/guardians understand the content (i.e. PowerPoint, handout, poster, note taking sheet etc.).	5.00
My child's strengths were discussed at the meeting.	4.88	My student's strengths were discussed at the meeting.	5.00
The discussion stayed solution-focused.	4.75	The discussion stayed solution-focused.	5.00
I felt confused by some of the language that was used (i.e. technical terms, acronyms, etc.).	4.38	Throughout the IEP meeting, language was used that might have confused the parent (i.e. technical terms, acronyms, etc.).	3.13

**Social Validity.** A 10-item post intervention survey assessed 4 case managers' perception of intervention feasibility on a 5-point Likert-like scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 5 = Strongly Agree). According to the social validity survey, case managers agreed to strongly agreed that SpEdTIPS was feasible to implement ( $M = 4.5$ ). On another item, 100% of case managers agreed that SpEdTIPS was an effective intervention for increasing parental satisfaction in IEP meetings ( $M = 5$ ). When asked which intervention

components they found most helpful, each case manager mentioned a different component. One stated that the visual aid she used was helpful in translating information for her non-English speaking family, another stated that focusing on parent input was helpful in increasing trust and rapport, and another reported that she gathered information from the parent communication sheet that would have not otherwise known. Of the 4 case managers that engaged in the intervention, all reported that would agree to strongly agree in continuing using SpEdTIPS components ( $M = 4.50$ ). Overall, results indicate case managers were satisfied to strongly satisfied with SpEdTIPS outcomes.

**Summary.** Phase 2 findings suggest promising results for future examination into the SpEdTIPS intervention. Although parents' perceptions of IEP knowledge, IEP satisfaction, and home-school partnerships were not found to be significant, case managers' perceptions of these constructs had significant findings. Specifically, results suggest that when case managers engage in the SpEdTIPS intervention, they believed that parents are more knowledgeable about the IEP process, parents' satisfaction of the IEP meeting increases, and parents' perceptions of home-school partnerships increase. Further, when examining IEP meeting outcomes, parents rated agree to strongly agree on majority of statements that examined overall outcomes that emerged from the IEP meeting. Case managers as well agreed or strongly agreed with 70% of the outcome statements, indicating that both parties were overall pleased with the end results. Although, fidelity was found to below 100%, indicating that not every intervention component was carried out the way it was intended, every case manager reported that they would continue to using SpEdTIPS intervention components in their continued facilitation of IEP meetings.

## **Chapter V**

### **Discussion**

Past literature emphasizes a need for training programs and interventions that target other IEP members rather than parents (Goldman & Burke, 2017). Currently, there is no intervention that targets using case managers' behaviors to increase parent satisfaction in IEP meetings. Parent satisfaction in IEP meetings has shown to be overall negative as parents express feelings of powerlessness, frustration, confusion, defenselessness, and being overwhelmed (Lake & Billingsley, 2000; Stoner et al., 2005; Goldman & Burke, 2017; İlik & Er, 2019; Mueller & Vick, 2019). These feelings arise from parents not knowing who is at the meeting and the role they play, being unsure of what to expect, only discussing student challenges, feeling an unbalanced power dynamic, and the use of technical jargon (Salas, 2004; Weishaar, 2010; Mueller, 2019; Mueller & Vick, 2019; Kurth et al., 2019).

The present study examined the efficacy of a school-based intervention designed to increase parental satisfaction in IEP meetings. It was hypothesized that parents' and educators' knowledge and satisfaction of the IEP meetings and perceptions of home-school partnerships would positively improve from pre- to post-intervention. The intervention designed included suggested evidence-based components from past research, as well as input from parents who have experiences with IEP meetings and experts in the education field. Specifically, the intervention components derived from parent focus group include the sending home the parent communication sheet prior to the meeting, the optional pre-collaboration meeting with IEP team school members, visual aid, and the post meeting follow up. The components that aligned with the research and were mentioned in the parent focus groups, as well as from the expert panel members, include the facilitation techniques

training, the IEP team introduction sheet sent home, following an agenda, stating the strengths of the student, keeping the discussion solution-oriented, and avoiding technical jargon. The main component that was derived from the expert panel focus group was the idea of continued communication with the families post IEP meeting. Results supported the initial hypotheses of educators' perceptions of parental knowledge and satisfaction, meaning that case managers believed that by engaging in the intentional actions steps, parents were more knowledgeable about the IEP process and were overall satisfied with the IEP meeting that took place. It was also found that educators' reports on parental perception of home-school partnership increased from pre- to post-intervention, indicating that case managers believed that parents views on home-school partnerships increased after attending the IEP meeting.

When examining parents' perceptions, while results showed an increase in mean scores for parental knowledge, parental satisfaction, and home-school partnerships, mean scores for the post-test were not significantly different from pre- to post-test for intervention participants. Upon further investigation, it was observed that scores across pre- and post-test for parental knowledge and satisfaction and perception of home-school partnerships were relatively high at pre-test, which could be connected with the lack of significant changes from pre- to post-test. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the dependent variables of parental knowledge and parental satisfaction had an increase in mean from pre- ( $M = 45.5$ ,  $M = 55.25$ ) to post-test ( $M = 45.88$ ,  $M = 57$ ). Similar to results found in the current study, in a meta-analysis that examined parent training programs used to increase parent involvement and satisfaction in IEP meetings, results showed no significant findings (Goldman & Burke, 2017).

The intentions of making parents more engaged in IEP meetings has not varied much over the years. Harry, Allen, and McLaughlin (1995) found parents to not be actively involved in the IEP process while Avcıoğlu (2011) found that parents hardly ever participant in the IEP processes and Shapiro (2021) found that teachers continue to lack skills in communicating with families. Communication skills do not simply start at the IEP meeting though. Parents are beginning to shape their perceptions before a meeting takes place based on previous communication experiences between them and the school (Lo, 2012). Similarly to Shaprio's (2021) findings, research shows that teacher education programs lack training on how to foster positive relationships with parents (Walker & Dotger, 2012), as well as how to communicate effectively during collaboration meetings (İlik, & Sarı, 2017). By not engaging families before IEP meetings and limiting their opportunities to provide input, schools could be potentially building a barrier for effective home-school collaboration (Tucker & Schwartz, 2013). In the current study, case managers engaged in a facilitation training prior to facilitating their planned IEP meetings. The training included information on current research in parent participation in IEP meetings, reframing, managing difficult situations, and using open-ended questions, affirmations, reflective listening, and summarizing (OARS; Lundahl et al., 2019). Every case manager reported strongly agree to the statement of, "I found the SpEdTIPS facilitation training helpful."

Additionally, it was hypothesized that case managers would view the SpEdTIPS intervention as helpful, feasible, and essential. Results showed the initial hypotheses being supported as all case managers overall views on social validity fell in the agree to strongly agree range ( $M = 4.64$ ). It was also reported that case managers would continue to use SpEdTIPS intervention components outside of the data collection time period. One case

manager stated, “Sending home the Parent Communication sheet was most helpful. It helped me gain information that I would not otherwise have from parents, and helped me to feel more prepared for the meeting. I also really liked using a visual aid, and I think the parents enjoyed that as well.” This specific case manager in a speech language pathologist (SLP) and included a video of the student utilizing the skills they had been working on with the SLP.

It is also essential to consider culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) families and the additional challenges when navigating the special education system. Parents may feel silenced if they are new to the country or culture and do not understand the special education system (Orellana & Guan, 2015). Educators need to relate their own beliefs to the families they interact with, identify the differences, and foster a positive IEP environment (Duffy-Sherr, 2021). CLD families also have the possible added challenge of not speaking or not being fluent in English. It was found difficult for parents to voice their opinions or concerns due to the language barrier (Harry, 2008). In the current study, one case manager used a PowerPoint as her visual aid and she was able to translate the important information into Spanish for the parent to view as the interpreter was explaining. She expressed that she believed this action made the parent more comfortable.

Overall, past literature highlights a need for clear guidelines for IEP meetings to be created, put in place, and utilized by educators. The responsibility of involving parents need to be placed on the school and viewed as a potential outlet for creativity based on the families’ needs. Parents may not feel comfortable stating their genuine opinions if the responsibility of involvement in the IEP process is placed on them (Goldman & Burke, 2017). The current study showed promising potential in utilizing evidence-based components and action steps being carried out by case managers to improve parents’ views and

perceptions of the IEP process. It can emphasize the need for open communication, exchanging ideas, and shared decision-making.

### **Limitations.**

While the findings from this study are enlightening to research on parent satisfaction in IEP meetings, it is evident that the small sample impacted the results. The investigator reached out to an additional 21 case managers in attempts to solicit and encourage their participation in the study, however, case managers either did not respond or indicated they did not wish to participate. Although more case managers were solicited to participate, the everyday stresses teachers experience need to be taken into consideration. The number of students on case manager's caseloads continues to increase (Dewey et al., 2017), as does the workload. Despite the fact that educators could use these intervention components to improve their practices, it also involved the added the component of data collection for themselves and for parents. Due to the small sample size, even the significant results should be interpreted with caution as the findings may not generalize to all school populations. It is also important to note that a control group was attempted, but unfortunately only one respondent followed through with data collection. In the future, it could be helpful to make data collection less time consuming and more rewarding. Using time efficiently in IEP meetings is already a consideration, and to take additional time away for parents to answer survey questions may not be appealing. Although the investigator attempted to make the number of survey questions for the pre and post assessments small, it was indicated by some of the case managers that it was too many for parents. One case manager stated, "Parents have to answer all of these? This is a lot of questions for parents to answer, especially EL families." Decreasing the number of survey questions may increase the likelihood of parents

and case managers participating. Also, increasing the monetary amount that case managers were compensated with for participating may be a higher incentive as well.

Another limitation that was impacted by the small sample, was the ability to run psychometric data on the created assessments. Running psychometrics with a sample of this size would not allow the investigator to make an adequate interpretation. Therefore, it cannot be determined if that constructs created are indeed measuring what they were intended to measure. Further, although case manager report of parent perceptions was significant, the fact that parent report was not may be an indication that the measure may not be assessing exactly what was intended. Future research should investigate if these abbreviated versions are psychometrically sound or use full version of standardized measures. Throughout the research, parent involvement and home-school partnerships importance is emphasized. Future researchers could focus on the relationship between families and school IEP team members across the years.

Additionally, the high levels of knowledge, satisfaction, and views on home-school partnerships at pre-test was fairly high, leaving little room for growth into the post-test. A reason for this could be that active parents were the individuals who agreed to be part of the study. Furthermore, of all previous studies that examined parent satisfaction in IEP meetings, only one included the added perspective of the teacher (Brinckerhoff & Vincent, 1986). The only participants in which data was collected from for the current study included the parent and case manager, leaving out a number of other IEP team members. Additional perspectives could be beneficial in understanding the home-school partnership construct. It is also noted that of all the parent respondents, only one was a father, compared to the other mother participants. This lack of paternal perspective is another limitation of the current study as it



leaves out a large percentage of the parent population. Further, survey data just gives a brief look into the viewpoint of respondents and does not capture the whole picture. The scales chosen were created by the investigator, derived from other validated measures (Fish, 2008; Martin et al., 2006; İlik & Er, 2019), but has not yet been found to be statistically sound, putting into question its true level of validity and reliability. Finally, this data was collected at the elementary level only. Therefore, the results do not generalize to middle or high school grade levels. IEP participants from higher grades may experience different views on parental knowledge and satisfaction, as well as home-school partnerships.

### **Future Directions.**

As previously stated, the current study focused on the perspective of elementary school parents. It would be beneficial to pilot the SpEdTIPS intervention with parents who have a student that is middle or high school aged. “As a group, parents of older children reported lower levels of satisfaction of involvement in the IEP process” (Spann et al., 2003, p. 235). Most studies focus on elementary aged students when examining parent involvement (Keith & Cool, 1992). Expanding the age range may be helpful in understanding specific components that parents feel necessary to have a positive experience with IEP meetings and further determining if those priority components change as students become older. Further, it would also be helpful to explore the role of the father being involved in the IEP process. Currently, most research involving students with disabilities centers around maternal involvement (Meadan, Stoner, & Angell, 2015). In the current study, out of the 7 participants, there was only 1 father. Additionally, reviewing and adding to the SpEdTIPS intervention could also be a future area to explore. Parents are often lacking knowledge of the IEP process and this has been found to be a contributing factor in the lower levels of parent

satisfaction (Nutting et al., 2006). Incorporating more ways to help parents understand the special education process, such as handouts at different time points, may help parents feel more included. There is also the idea of having classes or support groups to provide parents with educational information about the IEP process (Duffy-Sherr, 2021). Finally, an idea arose from one of the parent focus group participants that involved wishing they had support when first starting the special education process. She suggested that during the meeting, having another parent who has been through a similar experience to help guide and support would have been beneficial. Taking this a step further and building a mentor program amongst parents of children with IEP's could be a great support network to pilot in a district. Connecting parents whose children have the same disability category(ies) and are at various stages in their IEP journey could be an advantage for helping families better understand the IEP process and feel supported. It also takes some burden off the school to have to engage in that task.

## **Conclusions**

The present study examined the efficacy of a school-based intervention designed to increase parental satisfaction in IEP meetings. The development of this intervention was derived from evidence-based components that influence parent perceptions on IEP outcomes, as well as the need for taking the responsibility of parent involvement off of families. It was found that parents who were part of the intervention did not report a significant increase from pre- to post-test. However, educators' perceptions on parents' knowledge, satisfaction, and home-school partnerships did significantly increase after engaging in the SpEdTIPS intervention. It would be helpful to further explore the disconnect between parents' views and case managers' perceptions of parents views. It is important to note that overall mean for

parent reports on knowledge and satisfaction did increase from pre- to post-test, just not at a statistically significant level. All of the case managers who received the intervention had positive feedback about its helpfulness and feasibility to implement. All participants agreed they would continue using SpEdTIPS components throughout their IEP meetings.

Limitations include a small sample size, only including parents of elementary-aged students, lacking input from other IEP team members, and using measures that were self-created by the investigator. Despite these limitations, however, preliminary findings within the current study indicate a continued need for further research in the area of parental satisfaction in IEP meetings.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL FOR PARENTS

Parent Focus Group Questions	
Questions	Remember to Probe
<p>1. [Introduction]:</p> <p>a. In your opinion, what does an <b>ideal</b> special education team meeting look like?</p> <p>b. Please share a recent experience in which a special education team meeting was successful.</p>	<p>For an individual:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would you explain further?</li> <li>• Can you give me an example of what you mean?</li> <li>• Would you say more?</li> <li>• Is there anything else?</li> <li>• Please describe what you mean?</li> <li>• I don't understand.</li> <li>• Tell me more about that.</li> <li>• How does that work?</li> </ul> <p>For a group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who else has something?</li> <li>• What about the rest of you?</li> <li>• I see people nodding their heads; tell me about it.</li> <li>• We want to hear all the different points of view. Who else has something that might be a bit different?</li> </ul>
<p>2. [Introduction question]: Please share a recent experience in which a special education team meeting was unsuccessful.</p> <p>a. What were key components that made it <b>unsuccessful</b>?</p> <p>b. What could have been done to make it more <b>successful</b>?</p>	
<p>3. [Key question] How do parents, like yourself, <b>feel</b> during special education meetings?</p> <p>a. Why do you believe they <b>feel</b> this way?</p> <p>b. Do you see any <b>cultural differences</b> (i.e. race, ethnicity, SES) that impact their feelings towards special education meetings?</p>	
<p>4. [Key question] What action steps do you believe special education teams can take <b>BEFORE</b> meetings in order to increase parent satisfaction?</p> <p>a. Why do you believe this will make a <b>difference</b>?</p>	
<p>5. [Key question] What action steps do you believe special education teams can take <b>DURING</b> meetings in order to increase parent satisfaction?</p> <p>a. Why do you believe this will make a <b>difference</b>?</p>	
<p>6. [Key question] What action steps do you believe special education teams can take <b>AFTER</b> meetings in order to increase parent satisfaction?</p> <p>a. Why do you believe this will make a <b>difference</b>?</p>	
<p>7. [Key question] Do you feel special education team members have the training and ability to the action steps we discussed?</p>	
<p>8. [Ending question] Our goal is to increase parents understanding and satisfaction during special education meetings.</p> <p>a. What suggestions do you have for schools to improve how parents perceive the special education process?</p>	



APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL FOR EXPERT PANEL

<b>Expert Panel Focus Group Questions</b>	
Questions	Remember to Probe
<p>9. [Introduction]:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. In your opinion, what does an <b>ideal</b> special education team meeting look like?</li> <li>b. What were key components that made it <b>successful</b>?</li> <li>c. Please share a recent experience in which a special education team meeting was successful.</li> </ol>	<p>For an individual:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would you explain further?</li> <li>• Can you give me an example of what you mean?</li> <li>• Would you say more?</li> <li>• Is there anything else?</li> <li>• Please describe what you mean?</li> <li>• I don't understand.</li> <li>• Tell me more about that.</li> <li>• How does that work?</li> </ul> <p>For a group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who else has something?</li> <li>• What about the rest of you?</li> <li>• I see people nodding their heads; tell me about it.</li> <li>• We want to hear all the different points of view. Who else has something that might be a bit different?</li> </ul>
<p>10. [Key question] From your perception, how do parents <b>feel</b> during special education meetings?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Why do you believe they <b>feel</b> this way?</li> <li>b. Do you see any <b>cultural differences</b> (i.e. race, ethnicity, SES) that impact their feelings towards special education meetings?</li> </ol>	
<p>11. [Key question] What action steps do you believe special education teams can take <b>BEFORE</b> meetings in order to increase parent satisfaction?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Why do you believe this will make a <b>difference</b>?</li> <li>b. What do you believe is <b>preventing</b> schools from doing these steps already?</li> </ol>	
<p>12. [Key question] What action steps do you believe special education teams can take <b>DURING</b> meetings in order to increase parent satisfaction?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Why do you believe this will make a <b>difference</b>?</li> <li>b. What do you believe is <b>preventing</b> schools from doing these steps already?</li> </ol>	
<p>13. [Key question] What action steps do you believe special education teams can take <b>AFTER</b> meetings in order to increase parent satisfaction?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Why do you believe this will make a <b>difference</b>?</li> <li>b. What do you believe is <b>preventing</b> schools from doing these steps already?</li> </ol>	
<p>14. [Key question] Do you feel that the action steps discussed today are feasible to implement within the school setting?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Who will these responsibilities fall on?</li> </ol>	
<p>15. [Key question] Do you feel special education team members have the training and ability to the action steps we discussed?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. If no, what action steps can do be done to change this?</li> </ol>	
<p>16. [Ending question] My goal is to increase parents understanding and satisfaction during special education meetings.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What suggestions do you have for schools to improve how parents perceive the special education process?</li> <li>b. How can we make parents feel that their voice will make a difference in these meetings?</li> </ol>	

APPENDIX C

PRE-ASSESSMENT: PARENTAL PERCEPTION OF IEP MEETINGS

Derived from Fish (2008), Martin et al (2006), İlik & Er (2019)

Please indicate the name of your child's case manager: \_\_\_\_\_

Date you are completing this survey: \_\_\_\_\_

Time you are completing this survey: \_\_\_\_\_

Demographics:

1. What gender do you identify as?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Which category best describes you? Please select all that apply.\*

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Multiethnic
- Prefer not to disclose
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

3. My child is currently under the educational disability category of:

- Autism (AU)
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Specific Learning Disability (SLD)
- Hearing Impairment / Deafness
- Other Health Impairment (OHI)
- Vision Impairment
- Intellectual Disability (ID)
- Deaf/Blind
- Language Impairment (LI)
- Multiple Disabilities
- Speech Impairment- Sound System Disorder
- Young Child with Developmental Delay (YCDD)
- Orthopedic Impairment (OI)

4. What relationship do you have to the child who you are currently having an IEP meeting for?

- \_\_\_ Parent
- \_\_\_ Grandparent
- \_\_\_ Foster parent
- \_\_\_ Guardian
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:**

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements by using the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

---

**Knowledge of IEP Processes**

1. I know what an IEP is.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. I know the purpose of an IEP.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. I have a clear understanding of my rights as a parent in the evaluation process.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. An IEP meeting can happen without my consent or presence.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. I know what needs to happen for my child to qualify for an IEP.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. I know how often an IEP meeting is held.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

7. I can challenge the school's decision regarding the IEP outcome.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

8. Every child's IEP is the same.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

9. I know the action steps needed to evaluate for an IEP.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

10. I know how goals for an IEP are determined.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

**Satisfaction of IEP Meeting**

11. I was contacted prior to the IEP meeting via phone.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

12. I was contacted prior to the IEP meeting via email.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

13. I knew who was going to be present in the meeting prior to attending.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

14. I know what to expect coming into this meeting.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

15. I am walking into this meeting feeling confident.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

16. I understand everyone's role that is at this meeting.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

17. I feel comfortable asking questions at this meeting.

1	2	3	4	5
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	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
18. I feel comfortable saying what I think at this meeting.	1	2	3	4	5
	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
19. I plan on talking about my child's needs at this meeting.	1	2	3	4	5
	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
20. I believe people will listen to me at this meeting.	1	2	3	4	5
	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
21. My input will be valued.	1	2	3	4	5
	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
22. I fear I will be confused at this meeting.	1	2	3	4	5
	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
23. Overall, I believe I will have a positive experience at my child's IEP meeting.	1	2	3	4	5
	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

### **Home-School Partnerships**

24. I am comfortable contacting the school with concerns.	1	2	3	4	5
	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
25. I am treated with respect by my child's educators and administrators.	1	2	3	4	5
	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
26. I trust my child's educators.	1	2	3	4	5
	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
27. I trust my child's administrators.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
28. The adults at my child's school truly want the best for my child.					
	1	2	3	4	5
	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

## APPENDIX D

### POST-ASSESSMENT: PARENTAL PERCEPTION OF IEP MEETINGS

Derived from Fish (2008), Martin et al (2006), İlik & Er (2019)

Please indicate the name of your child's case manager:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date you are completing this survey: \_\_\_\_\_

Time you are completing this survey: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements by using the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

---

#### **Knowledge of IEP Processes**

1. I know what an IEP is.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. I know the purpose of an IEP.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. I have a clear understanding of my rights as a parent in the evaluation process.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. An IEP meeting can happen without my consent or presence.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. I know what needs to happen for my child to qualify for an IEP.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. I know how often an IEP meeting is held.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

7. I can challenge the school's decision regarding the IEP outcome.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

8. Every child's IEP is the same.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

9. I know the action steps needed to evaluate for an IEP.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

10. I know how goals for an IEP are determined.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

**Satisfaction of IEP Meeting**

11. I walked into the meeting feeling confident.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

12. I understood everyone's role that was at the meeting.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---



Strong Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

13. My child's strengths were discussed at the meeting.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Strong Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

14. I felt comfortable asking questions at the meeting.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Strong Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

15. I felt comfortable saying what I thought.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Strong Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

16. I talked about my child's needs at the meeting.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Strong Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

17. I believe people listened to me at the meeting.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Strong Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

18. My input was valued.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Strong Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

19. I was confused at the meeting.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Strong Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

20. Overall, I had a positive experience at my child's IEP meeting.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Strong Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

**Satisfaction of IEP Outcomes**

21. I helped make decisions.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Strong Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

22. I had a say in what the outcome should be.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Strong Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

23. My opinion influenced the IEP outcome for my child.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Strong Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

24. The goals defined for my child help meet their needs.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Strong Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

25. We discussed supports that my child needs now.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Strong Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

26. I know how I can support my child's needs.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Strong Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

27. I agree with the decision made at the meeting.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Strong Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

**Home-School Partnerships**

28. I am comfortable contacting the school with concerns.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

29. I am treated with respect by educators and administrators.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

30. I trust my child's educators.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

31. I trust my child's administrators.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

32. The adults at my child's school truly want the best for my child.

1	2	3	4	5
Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

## APPENDIX E

### PRE-ASSESSMENT: EDUCATORS' PERCEPTION OF IEP MEETINGS

Derived from Fish (2008), Martin et al (2006), İlik & Er (2019)

Please enter YOUR name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date you are completing this survey: \_\_\_\_\_

Time you are completing this survey: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements by using the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

---

#### **Parental Knowledge of IEP Processes**

1. **Going into** an IEP meeting, I believe parents/guardians know what an IEP is.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. **Leaving** an IEP meeting, I believe parents/guardians know what an IEP is.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. **Going into** an IEP meeting, I believe parents/guardians know the purpose of an IEP.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. **Leaving** an IEP meeting, I believe parents/guardians know the purpose of an IEP.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. Parents/guardians have a clear understanding of their rights as a parent/guardian in the special education process.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
6. An IEP meeting can happen without parent/guardian consent.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
7. An IEP meeting can happen without a parent/guardian present.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
8. Parents/guardians know the action steps needed to evaluate for an IEP.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
9. Parents/guardians understand what happened for their child to qualify for an IEP.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
10. Parents/guardians know how often an IEP meeting is held.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
11. Parents/guardians know they can challenge the school's decision regarding the IEP outcome.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
12. Parents/guardians believe that every child's IEP is the same.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
13. Parents/guardians know how goals for an IEP are determined.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |

**Parental Satisfaction of IEP Meeting**

14. I contact parents/guardians prior to the IEP meeting via phone.

- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
15. I contact parents/guardians prior to the IEP meeting via email.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
16. Parents/guardians know which individuals are going to be present in the IEP meeting prior to attending.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
17. Parents/guardians know what to expect coming into IEP meetings.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
18. Parents/guardians walk into IEP meetings feeling confident.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
19. Parents/guardians understand everyone's role that is at IEP meetings.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
20. Parents/guardians feel comfortable asking questions in IEP meetings.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
21. Parents/guardians feel comfortable stating their opinions at IEP meetings.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
22. Parents/guardians talk about their child's needs at IEP meetings.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
23. Parents/guardians believe people will listen to them at IEP meetings.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Strongly Disagree    Disagree            Neutral              Agree                Strongly Agree

24. Parents/guardians' input is valued in IEP meetings.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Strongly Disagree    Disagree            Neutral              Agree                Strongly Agree

25. Parents/guardians have a fear that they will be confused at some point during an IEP meeting.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Strongly Disagree    Disagree            Neutral              Agree                Strongly Agree

26. Overall, parents/guardians have a positive experience at their child's IEP meetings.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Strongly Disagree    Disagree            Neutral              Agree                Strongly Agree

**Home-School Partnerships**

27. I am satisfied with the amount of contact between the school and the parents/guardians.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Strongly Disagree    Disagree            Neutral              Agree                Strongly Agree

28. I wish I had more frequent, consistent communication with parents/guardians.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Strongly Disagree    Disagree            Neutral              Agree                Strongly Agree

29. I am comfortable contacting parents/guardians with concerns.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Strongly Disagree    Disagree            Neutral              Agree                Strongly Agree

30. Parents/guardians are comfortable contacting the school with concerns.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Strongly Disagree    Disagree            Neutral              Agree                Strongly Agree

31. I contact parents/guardians with positives and praises that happen with their student.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Strongly Disagree    Disagree            Neutral              Agree                Strongly Agree

32. Parents/guardians are treated with respect by their child's educators and administrators.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

33. Parents/guardians trust their child's educators.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

34. Parents/guardians trust their child's administrators.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

35. Parents/guardians believes that the adults at their child's school truly want the best for their child.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

36. A strong partnership between home and school is essential for the student's success in school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree



APPENDIX F

POST-ASSESSMENT: EDUCATORS' PERCEPTION OF IEP MEETINGS

Derived from Fish (2008), Martin et al (2006), İlik & Er (2019)

Please enter YOUR name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date you are completing this survey: \_\_\_\_\_

Time you are completing this survey: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions:

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements by using the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

---

**Parental Knowledge of IEP Processes**

1. Parents/guardians know what an IEP is.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. Parents/guardians know the purpose of an IEP.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. Parents/guardians have a clear understanding of their rights as a parent in the special education process.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. An IEP meeting can happen without parent/guardian consent.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. An IEP meeting can happen without a parent/guardian present.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. Parents/guardians know the action steps needed to evaluate for an IEP.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- |   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| 7. Parents/guardians understand what happened for their child to qualify for an IEP.          | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 8. Parents/guardians know how often an IEP meeting is held.                                   | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 9. Parents/guardians know they can challenge the school's decision regarding the IEP outcome. | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 10. Parents/guardians believes every child's IEP is the same.                                 | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 11. Parents/guardians know how goals for an IEP are determined.                               | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |

### **Satisfaction of IEP Meeting**

- |   |                   |          |         |       |                |
|---|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| 12. Name tags were provided.  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 13. Parents/guardians understood everyone's role that was at the meeting.   | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 14. An agenda was followed.   | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 15. Some type of visual aid was used in the meeting to better help parents/guardians understand the content (i.e. PowerPoint, handout, poster, note taking sheet etc.). | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 16. The student's strengths were discussed at the meeting.  |                   |          |         |       |                |

- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
17. The discussion stayed solution-focused.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
18. Throughout the IEP meeting, language was used that might have confused the parent (i.e. technical terms, acronyms, etc.).
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
19. Parents/guardians were confused at the IEP meeting.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
20. Parents/guardians input was valued.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
21. In your opinion, parents/guardians felt people listened to them at the meeting.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
22. In your opinion, parents/guardians walked out of the meeting feeling confident.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
23. Overall, parents/guardians had a positive experience at their child's IEP meeting.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |

**Satisfaction of IEP Outcomes**

24. Parents/guardians had a say in what the outcome should be.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
25. Parents/guardians opinion influenced the IEP outcome for their child.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
26. The goals defined for their child help meet their needs.
- |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
|  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |

27. We discussed supports that their child needs now.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

28. The parent/guardian knows how they can support their child's needs.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

29. Parents/guardians agree with the decision made at the meeting.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

30. I feel confident the team will follow through with the decisions made.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

**Parent Engagement**

31. Parents/guardians were active partners in the IEP meeting.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

32. Parents/guardians helped make decisions at the IEP meeting.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

33. Parents/guardians talked about their child's needs at the IEP meeting.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

34. In your opinion, parents/guardians felt comfortable asking questions at the meeting.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

35. Parents/guardians asked questions in the IEP meeting.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

36. In your opinion, parents/guardians felt comfortable stating their opinion.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

## Home-School Partnerships

37. I am comfortable contacting the parents/guardians with concerns.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

38. Parents/guardians are treated with respect by their child's educators and administrators.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

39. Parents/guardians trust their child's educators.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

40. Parents/guardians trust their child's administrators.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

41. Parents/guardians believes that the adults at their child's school truly want the best for their child.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

42. A strong partnership between home and school is essential for the student's success in school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

APPENDIX G

SPEdTIPS (SPECIAL EDUCATION TEAMS INCREASING PARENT SATISFACTION)  
MANUAL

# SpEdTIPS:

Special Education Teams Increasing Parent Satisfaction-  
Building an Intervention to Increase Parent Satisfaction for  
Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meetings

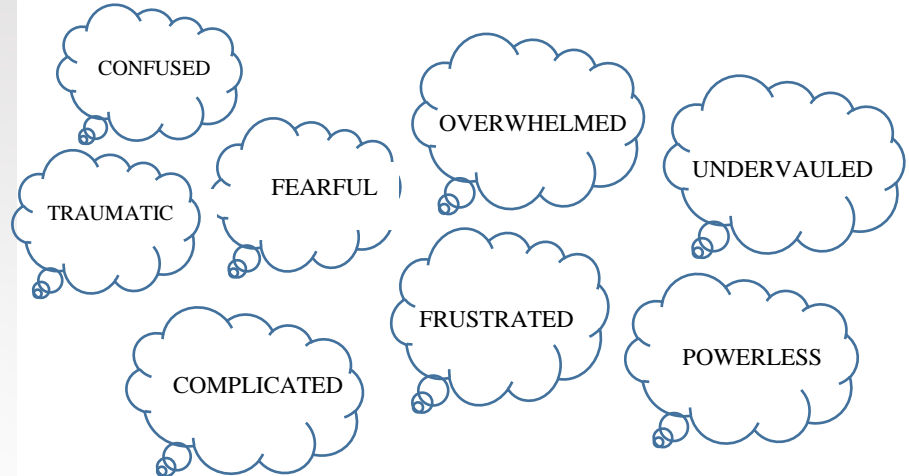
## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT:

In the United States, approximately 7 million children receive special education services, which equates to 14% of public school students (NCES, 2019). This means that up to 7 million parents or guardians (from now on referred to as ‘parents’) also go through the process of their child being evaluated for possible services. As indicated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), special education law requires that a parent be a key member of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team (IDEA, 2006).

## Parents’ previous experiences

Stoner et al. (2005), İlik & Er (2019), Mueller & Vick (2019)

Previous research has shown that parents often have negative feelings associated with IEP meetings, such as...



Even more concerning is when taking into consideration our families with culturally diverse backgrounds and their negative experiences associated with IEP meetings. Some Mexican American families who have children with special needs felt their concerns and input was often not valued during IEP meetings (Salas, 2004).

Currently there is a lasting culture around placing more weight on professional judgement and assessment data when making decisions for IEP than on parental observations and knowledge of their child (Fish, 2008). This is an unfortunate and unfair culture because the one suffering most from this is the student. Parents are intended, and required by law (IDEA, 2006), to be equal members of the IEP team. It is our job as educators to ensure that we are doing everything in our power to help make that happen. It is well known that parent involvement can be an essential component in a student’s educational success (Feuerstein, 2000; Fan & Chen, 2001; Goldman & Burke, 2017). Let’s help parents begin to feel that special education is a gift for their child, rather than feeling like it is daunting process that they have to dread going through.

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, the definition of parent is a person who brings up and cares for another (Merriam-Webster, 2022). It is acknowledged that “parent” is not an inclusive term and that there are many synonyms for the individuals who take on the role of caring for children and their needs. Such as a guardian, caregiver, grandparent, foster parent, stepparent, etc. For this manual, however, we will be using the word “parent” as the overarching term to describe the legal guardian and educational decision maker of the ch

## Intervention Components

### **Pre-Meeting**

1. Facilitation Techniques Training Take-Aways
2. Communication home prior to meeting
  - a. Explain the purpose of the meeting
  - b. Explain the parent's role and how they can come prepared
  - c. Explain why so many individuals are invited to meeting
  - d. Offer an IEP draft to parents
  - e. Send home the 'Parent Communication' sheet
3. IEP Team Introduction Sheet sent home
4. Pre-Collaboration Meeting with IEP Team School Members  
(*optional*)

### **During Meeting**

1. Name Tags
2. Agenda
3. Visual Aids
  - a. PowerPoint
  - b. Handouts
  - c. Note Taking Sheet for Parents
4. Strengths of the Student
5. Solution-oriented discussion
  - a. Encourage Parent Participation
6. Avoid technical jargon
  - a. Provide parents with acronym cheat sheet
  - b. Here is what you say, here is what you could say instead

### **Post Meeting**

1. Post Meeting Follow Up
2. Continued Communication

### **Fidelity Check**



## **PRE-MEETING**

Action steps to engage in BEFORE the IEP takes place

## WHY:

Research shows that teacher education programs lack training on how to foster positive relationships with parents (Walker & Dotger, 2012), as well as how to communicate effectively during these collaboration meetings (İlik, & Sarı, 2017).

## Facilitation Techniques Training Take- Always

**WHEN:** Before engaging with families about their IEP meeting.

**WHAT:** A training to learn facilitation strategies that are needed for IEP meetings due to their unique composition of team members, their goal of meeting student needs, and the requirement of parent involvement.

- Reframing- Think about your word choice
- People want to feel heard and feel important
  - Listen
  - Use parent's suggestions
  - Take notes of what parents say
  - Check in with parent's feelings
- Encourage Parent Participation
  - Ask parents questions
  - Slow down the pace of the discussion
  - Give compliments
- OARS
  - Open-ended questions
  - Affirmations
  - Reflective listening
  - Summarizing
- Managing difficult situations
  - Set meeting rules
  - Bring data
  - Tabling issues
  - Deflecting to administration
  - Ask questions

**ACTION STEP:** Complete Facilitation Training before engaging with families initial or annual IEP process

## WHY:

Weishaar (2010) stated that contacting parents prior to the IEP meeting to review the purpose of the meeting and provide them with insight of what will be discussed is the most essential step in preparing for an IEP meeting. This step is so important because one study showed that 76% of parents going through the evaluation process did not even know what an IEP was (İlik, Ş. Ş., & Er, R. K., 2019). Parents need to be able to enter IEP meetings feeling confident in their roles and the roles of each team members. This step can also strengthen the home-school partnership. By not engaging families before IEP meetings and limiting their opportunities to provide input, schools could be potentially building a barrier for effective home-school collaboration (Tucker & Schwartz, 2013).

## Communication Home PRIOR to IEP Meeting

**WHEN:** Three to ten days prior to the IEP meeting.

**WHAT:** There are several reasons why communicating with a parent before an IEP meeting is beneficial. The following is a list of talking points when communicating before the IEP meeting:

- (1) Explain the purpose and goals of the meeting.
- (2) Explain to the parent what their role in the meeting will be and what they can do to come to the meeting prepared.
- (3) Ensure the parents that the goals that will be set are a team decision and remind them of the high importance you place on their input.
- (4) Make parents aware of any potential conflicts. For example, maybe parents are wanting their child to receive more services than the school is offering or maybe the school is hoping to place the student in a particular setting for more minutes than the parent agrees with. Educators do not like to be surprised at IEP meetings, nor do parents.
- (5) Ask the parent if they have any questions before going into the meeting.
- (6) Verify the meeting format (i.e. in person or virtual), location, date, and time with parent.
- (7) Tell the parent that you will be sending home a 'Parent Communication' form for them to complete in order for them to share what they believe are their child's strengths, their main concerns, and what goals they would like to have for their child this year.
- (8) Offer a draft of the IEP to parents before the meeting.

**ACTION STEP:** Talk to the parents personally before the IEP. This communication method can look different based on a parents' preferences (i.e. phone, email, paper form).

**ACTION STEP:** Send home the 'Parent Communication' sheet.

## Parent Communication Sheet

### **It is time for your child's IEP and I want to hear from you!**

- What are your favorite things about your child? What makes him/her special?
- What are your child's strengths (both related to and outside of school)?
- At this time, what is most motivating to him/her?
- What is/are your main goal(s) for your child this year?
- What are your current concerns?
- *What are areas in which you would like to see changes for your child's programming/instruction in the coming year? (for ReEvals)*
- *What accommodations would you like to see implemented in order to help your child be most successful during this IEP cycle? (For ReEvals)*
- Any other information you would like for me to know...?

## WHY:

Almost all IEP meetings are an imbalance of home/family participants versus school participants, with only 2 parents and many school staff members. It is important to engage in strategies in order to combat these possible perceived power dynamic (Mueller, 2019).

## IEP Team Introduction Sheet

**WHEN:** Two-five days prior to the IEP meeting.

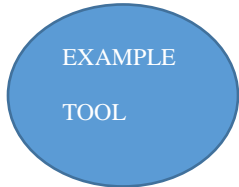
**WHAT:** The IEP Team Member introduction sheet will have a picture of each member of the IEP team for that student and will include that team member's name, title, the role they will play in that child's case, and their contact information.

Sending this team introduction sheet home before the meeting is going to be beneficial for the following reasons:

- Parents are going to know the name and role of every team member involved in their child's case before the IEP meeting begins.
- Parents will hopefully feel less intimidated walking into the IEP meeting as they can somewhat put a face to a name due to the introduction sheet.
- Parents have all team members' contact information in one place.

**ACTION STEP:** Send home the "IEP Team Members" introduction sheet. Use one of the templates below or create your own! Send one to the primary investigator as well

# Example of IEP Team Member Introduction Sheet



## Meet Your Child's IEP Team

Central Perk Elementary



**RACHEL GREEN**      RGREEN@CENTRALPERK.ORG  
SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER  
"Provides services outlined in the IEP and ensures that student performance data are collected and analyzed, and then instruction and intervention are modified accordingly"



**CHANDLER BING**      CBING@CENTRALPERK.ORG  
GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHER  
"Provides the core academic instruction and implements required accommodation and modifications"



**MONICA GELLER**      MGELLER@CENTRALPERK.ORG  
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST  
"Explains the instructional implications of the evaluation results to the team and interprets the instructional implications of the evaluation results."

THE IRIS CENTER. (2008). COLLABORATING WITH FAMILIES. RETRIEVED FROM  
HTTPS://IRIS.PEABODY.VANDERBILT.EDU/MODULE/FAM/

Follow this link to use the example template:

[https://www.canva.com/design/DAErNgoZ9Z4/ExMdnkkjVwN-TCgyZCfZfA/view?utm\\_content=DAErNgoZ9Z4&utm\\_campaign=designshere&utm\\_medium=link&utm\\_source=sharebutton&mode=preview](https://www.canva.com/design/DAErNgoZ9Z4/ExMdnkkjVwN-TCgyZCfZfA/view?utm_content=DAErNgoZ9Z4&utm_campaign=designshere&utm_medium=link&utm_source=sharebutton&mode=preview)

## Meet Your Child's IEP Team

Central Perk Elementary



**PHOEBE BUFFAY**      PBUFFAY@CENTRALPERK.ORG  
SCHOOL COUNSELOR (LEA REPRESENTATIVE)  
"Provides or supervises the provision of the specially designed instruction, contributes to the understanding of the general education curriculum, and presents information about the availability of the LEA's resources."



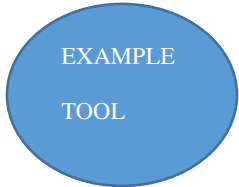
**JOEY TRIBBIANI**      JTRIBBIANI@CENTRALPERK.ORG  
SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST  
Develop and implement goals, provide speech and language services, as well as program modifications/supports.



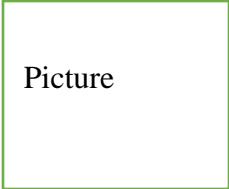
**ROSS GELLER**      RGELLER@CENTRALPERK.ORG  
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST  
Related services that provides occupational therapy needs such as fine motor, gross motor, and sensory supports.

THE IRIS CENTER. (2008). COLLABORATING WITH FAMILIES. RETRIEVED FROM  
HTTPS://IRIS.PEABODY.VANDERBILT.EDU/MODULE/FAM/

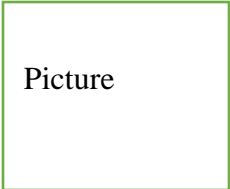
Created using Canva.com and The IRIS Center. (2008). Collaborating with families. Retrieved from <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/fam>



Meet Your Child's IEP Team!



Name:  
Title:  
Contact Info:  
Role:



Name:  
Title:  
ContactInfo:  
Role:



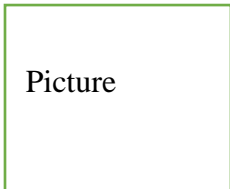
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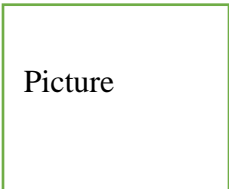
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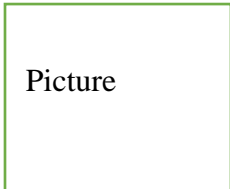
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Title:  
Contact Info:  
Role:



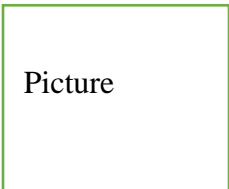
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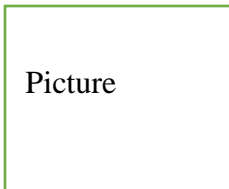
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Role:



Name:  
Title:  
ContactInfo:  
Role:

## WHY:

Team members coming together and discussing a student's strengths, present level, progress, and needs before presenting the information to the parent could be beneficial for many reasons. First, it allows each team member to update the case manager. Second, it allows everyone to be on the same page and clear of what the student's priority needs are before being in front of the parent. And finally, it helps be able to run the IEP meeting be more time efficient due to already having pre collaboration conversations completed. Research shows that one measure that educators believe that would improve IEP meetings would be to assess and reflect on student needs before the meeting in order to ensure quality feedback and input (Fish, 2009). The number of students on case manager's caseloads continues to increase (Dewey et al., 2017). This means that each one of their IEP teams for each individual student can look different and gathering information about the student ahead of the IEP meeting is more important than ever.

## Pre-Collaboration Meeting (optional)

**WHEN:** Two to seven days prior to the IEP meeting.

**WHO:** Special Education Teacher and General Education Teacher (optional: SLP, OT, School Psychologist, Administrator, Counselor, Interventionist)

**WHAT:** A collaboration meeting with IEP team school members to verify the agenda, gather and distribute assessment data, and address any potential concerns that they believe may arise in the upcoming meeting.

This meeting will be a place where all school IEP team members can gather and the case manager can determine the team culture. Research shows that each IEP team builds their own culture that is derived of the all of the team members attitudes and beliefs and influences the dynamics of the IEP meeting (Dabkowski, 2004). Culture can be demonstrated in how team members share information in and outside the meeting, who is willing to speak up during the meeting, how decisions are made based on individuals statements or influence, and the specific recommendations and strategies suggested during the IEP meeting (Jones & Peterson-Ahmad, 2017). At the pre-collaboration meeting, the case manager can familiarize their self with the IEP team culture and be sure to advocate for the parent during this time.

Another positive reason for holding the pre-collaboration meeting is discussing the strengths of a student that you may be unfamiliar with. This meet could help write the goals for the IEP or you could even present goal ideas to the team to see if they are appropriate before presenting them to the parent.

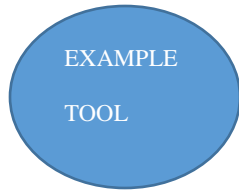
One could argue that having a pre-collaboration meeting with team members but leaving out a vital team member, the parent, could be problematic. But research shows that parents do appreciate receiving a draft of the IEP before the meeting, as it helps them feel more at ease, prepare questions ahead of time, and feel more confident knowing what they are signing (Staples & Diliberto, 2010; Panico, 2019). Having a pre-collaboration meeting could help you better formulate this draft document for the parent.

**TIP:** If you are uncomfortable meeting without the parent beforehand, ask the parent's permission to convene with the team when you personally contact them before the IEP meeting.

**ACTION STEP:** Hold a pre-collaboration meeting with IEP team school members before the IEP meeting takes place.

**TIP:** For linguistically diverse families that an interpreter will be used, it might be helpful to set up an appointment with the interpreter before the IEP meeting to discuss any educational terms that will be used during the IEP meeting.





## IEP Collaboration Conversation Tool

**Instructions:** Do not fill out this form alone! These guiding questions are intended to be used in conversation between IEP team members (i.e. special education teacher, general education teacher, SLP, OT, interventionist, school psychologist, etc.) when collaboratively preparing for student's IEP.

**Student name/grade:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date Completed:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Conversation participants:

Special Education Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ General Ed Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Others (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

- What are the student's strengths (academic, social, and independent functioning)?
  
- Describe district/state test results.
  
- Describe classroom assessment data.
  
- How is the student progressing within the general education curriculum?
  - What data supports this progression?
  
  - What visual aids will be used to share progress with parents?
  
- What are the student's academic, behavioral, & social emotional needs (related to assessment results described above)?
  - How have the parents' main concerns been addressed?
  
- Considering academic needs as identified by data listed above, as well as district curriculum priorities, which Missouri Learning Standards might you prioritize for this student?
  
- What curriculum/strategies/interventions will be used to help the student reach their goals?
  
- What are some key accommodations that might be needed to help the student reach this goal?
  
- What other info should be considered during IEP development?

Adapted from St. Louis Special School District's IEP Collaboration Conversation Tool (2015-16)

## **THE MEETING**

Action steps to engage in DURING the IEP meeting

## WHY:

There are often many individuals sitting around the IEP meeting table that the parent may have never met before. Weishaar (2010), who incorporated strength-based planning into the IEP process, suggested that the first step in presenting the meeting is providing name tags for all members of the IEP team.

## Name Tags

**WHEN:** Before the meeting begins (day of).

**WHAT:** Provide name tags to each individual at the IEP meeting is a way to ensure that parents feel welcomed and comfortable the minute they enter the space. It allows them to know everyone in the room by name.

**ACTION STEP:** Hand out name tags as team members enter the meeting space

## WHY:

Using an agenda throughout an IEP meeting can be thought of as a meeting “guide”. One study showed that parents reported positive experiences with an IEP meeting when an agenda was in place (Mueller & Vick, 2019). Parents described “it as a tool that helped the team stay on topic, make the meeting transparent, and allowed structure to ensure important issues are discussed” (Mueller & Vick, 2019, p. 75).

## Agenda

**WHEN:** Beginning of the IEP meeting

**WHAT:** Determine what specific topics are required to discuss and think about if there are any other areas that you would like to bring forward to the team. Create a list of items that will need to be discussed at the IEP meeting.

There are two essential components to an effective agenda:

1. Determine what main topics will be discussed
2. Determine how much time you will spend on each topic

(Mueller, 2009)

- **TIP:** You could send the agenda home early prior to the meeting (with the ‘Parent Communication’ sheet) and ask if there are any additional agenda items the parents would like to add.
- **TIP:** Sending home the agenda early also allows the parent to know exactly what to expect and can help them better prepare for discussion points.
- **TIP:** You could also add to the agenda each team member's role and responsibility. Being able to clearly define each team member's role and responsibilities for the meeting will help set the expectations and keep the conversation going. It also can help make the parent feel more prepared on what to expect from each participant in the meeting.
- **TIP:** You could discuss the agenda outline at the Pre-Collaboration meeting and ask for feedback from team members.

**ACTION STEP:** Provide an agenda at the beginning of the IEP meeting.

- This can be done via handout or displayed on screen.

## IEP AGENDA

1. Introduction of team members
2. Purpose and outcomes of the meeting
3. Review of Parent Rights/ Community Advisory Committee on Special Education (CAC) / Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) information
4. Review assessment findings
  - a. General Education Teacher
  - b. Special Education Teacher
  - c. School Psychologist
  - d. Other Specialists: Speech/Language Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, Counselor, etc.
5. Parent input
6. Review and determine eligibility criteria (initial & 3 year reevaluations only)
7. *Develop Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) at age 16 or younger, as appropriate*
8. *Develop Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP), as appropriate*
9. Develop goals and objectives
10. Discuss the placement continuum (service/program options needed)
11. Determine appropriate placement, services and accommodations/modifications
12. Review summary of notes taken during the meeting
13. Clarify next scheduled review date (remind participants that they may call an IEP team meeting at any time)
14. Sign all required forms

Adapted from: Procedural Manual Teacher Edition: Section 2- IEP Meetings: Types, Sequences, and Resources.

Transition to Kindergarten IEP AGENDA

1. Introductions: (All Participants)
  - a. Team member name and role
2. Review norms (Admin)
  - a. Focus on the needs of the student
  - b. Communicate clearly and share their views willingly
  - c. Listen carefully and let others speak without interruption
  - d. Be open to ideas and respect the views of others
  - e. Questions for clarification are welcomed
  - f. Recall that everything said is confidential
  - g. Honor time limits and stay on task
3. Purpose of the Meeting: (Early Childhood Case Manager)
  - a. To develop an Individualized Educational Plan for the transition from Early Childhood Program to Kindergarten at Central Perk Elementary.
3. Strengths of the Student (All Participants)
4. Present level of Academic Achievement/Performance: (~20 minutes) (Early Childhood Case Manager and Staff)
  - b. Current Eligibility (Early Childhood Case Manager)
  - c. Critical areas of need (Early Childhood Case Manager)
  - d. Progress on Goals (Early Childhood Case Manager and Related Services)
  - e. Parent Concerns (Parents)
4. Special Considerations (~2 minutes) (Early Childhood Case Manager)
5. Proposed Goals for Kindergarten (~10 minutes) (Central Perk team and K Teacher)
  - a. Connection to Standards and Critical areas of need (Central Perk Case Manager)
6. Proposed Minutes for the remainder of Early Childhood (~5 minutes) (Early Childhood Team)
7. Proposed Minutes for Kindergarten (~10 minutes) (Central Perk Team)
  - a. Direct Services
  - b. Related Services
  - c. How will this look in the schedule for this child? (Kindergarten Teacher)
8. Placement decision (~ 2 minutes) (Central Perk Case Manager)
9. State/District Testing (~ 1 min) (Central Perk Case Manager)
10. Accommodations/ Modifications (~ 5 minutes) (All participants)
11. Sign necessary forms? Questions? (~ 5-10 minutes) (Early Childhood and Central Perk Case managers)

Thank you so much for helping to ensure \_\_\_\_\_'s successful transition to elementary school!

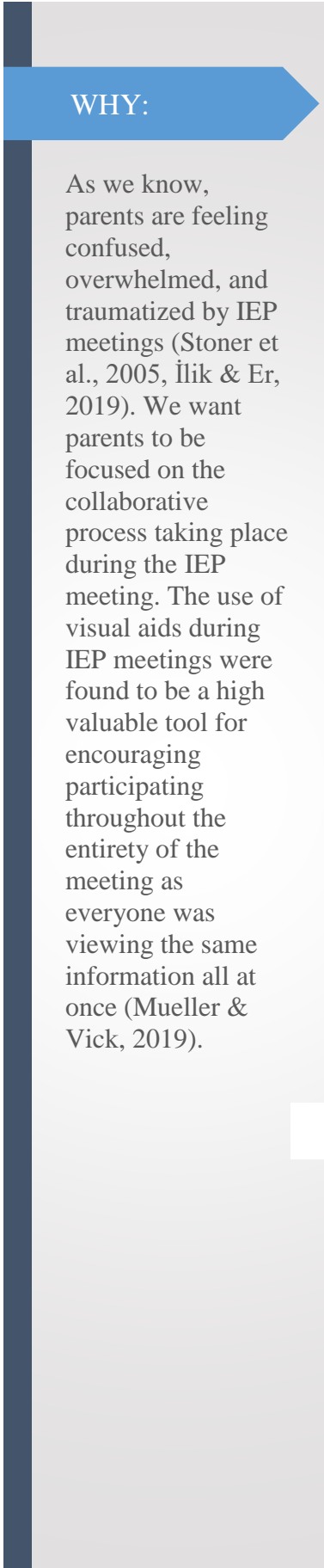
Contact Info:

- Elem Principal Name:
- SPED Coordinator Name:
- Case manager:

(INSERT STUDENT PICTURE)

(Student Name and Grade)

Adapted from: St. Louis Special School District and partner district, Lindbergh School District



**WHY:**

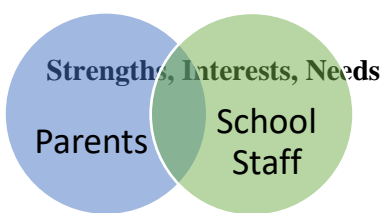
As we know, parents are feeling confused, overwhelmed, and traumatized by IEP meetings (Stoner et al., 2005, İlik & Er, 2019). We want parents to be focused on the collaborative process taking place during the IEP meeting. The use of visual aids during IEP meetings were found to be a high valuable tool for encouraging participating throughout the entirety of the meeting as everyone was viewing the same information all at once (Mueller & Vick, 2019).

**Visual Aids**

**WHEN:** During the IEP meeting.  
**WHAT:** Visual charting, such as electronic projection (e.g., PowerPoint), laminated charts, or writing in real time on a large easel are effective strategies that can provide IEP team members with the ability to collaboratively view the same material (Mueller & Vick, 2019, p. 76).

We want parents to feel like they are equal members of the IEP teams. In order to reach that goal, we need to think about what we can provide to them to level the playing field. Parents do not live in the education world and discuss present levels, percentages, and academic or behavioral goals every day. It is important for us to provide them with tools and resources to allow them the opportunity to take in a large amount of information in a short amount of time.

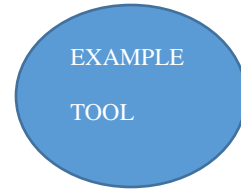
One way to incorporate a visual aid into a conversation is when discussing how we can use a student’s strengths to help us build on their needs. You can use a Venn diagram to display the parents’ thoughts and school staff members’ opinions of the student’s strengths, interests, and needs and also if any of those overlap. This visual can show that all IEP team members do have the same vision and are trying to reach the same goal. Or there can be really good conversation as to why there might be a disconnect between home and school visions. You can use a visual aid similar to the one below to guide your conversation about how the strengths and interests support a home-school partnership vision, as well as discuss what skills may be needed to accomplish that vision. This conversation is going to be really important because it will help parents think about the overall goal in light of the student’s abilities and needs and can hopefully help guide your decision making for upcoming decisions.



- Other visual aid ideas:**
- PowerPoint presentation
  - Parent Handout / Draft of the IEP
  - Note Taking Sheet for Parents
  - Work Sample (and deidentified peer comparison)
  - Poster Made by the Student
  - Video of student (made on a school device)

**ACTION STEP:** Determine and use a visual aid in your IEP meeting. You can pick one from the list, use an example provide or come up with your own idea!

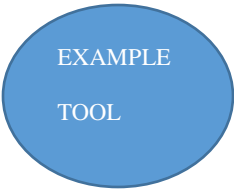
## Example Visual Aid PowerPoint Presentation



[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1GxMXArgB9OZvbpd48fuwKLFrKHiWR0rIxd\\_f5R-IOEA/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1GxMXArgB9OZvbpd48fuwKLFrKHiWR0rIxd_f5R-IOEA/edit?usp=sharing)



IEP Meeting Notes



**Student name/grade:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date**  
**Completed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**IEP Team Members:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Reason for Meeting:** \_\_\_\_\_ Initial \_\_\_\_\_ ReEval \_\_\_\_\_ Other:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Student Eligibility:** \_\_\_\_\_

Student Testing Information:

Student Present Performance:

Goals:

Services:

## WHY:

IEP meetings are often focused around discussing a child's deficits and the skills they are lacking. Weishaar (2010), who incorporated strength-based planning into the IEP process, suggested that the most important step in facilitating is setting a positive tone for the meeting by asking each IEP team member to provide a brief strength of the student. It was also noted by researchers that when soliciting parent input, most IEP forms only prompt parents to share their concerns, but asked nothing about their child's strengths (Kurth et al., 2019).

## Strengths of the Student

**WHEN:** Beginning of the IEP meeting.

**WHAT:** Discussion of a student's areas of strength. It is important for all team members to be focusing on the positives of the student and trying to figure out how we can use their strengths to improve their areas of growth.

### EXAMPLES:

#### Academic Strengths

- "Eager to learn"
- "Outside of the box thinker and finds creative solutions"
- "Initiates tasks without prompts"
- "Explains ideas well"
- "Often asks relevant questions"
- "Comes prepared"
- "Completes work in a timely manner"

#### Behavior Strengths

- "Enjoys sticking to a routine"
- "Can follow multi-step directions without multiple prompts"
- "Asks for help appropriately when needed"
- "Attempts to solve problems independently before asking for help"
- "Able to keep track of their personal belongings"
- "Checks in on friends in the classroom"
- "Forms positive relationships with peers"

**ACTION STEP:** Each team member state a minimum of one strength of the student. The case manager should document these strengths.

## WHY:

Parents are essential members to the IEP team and should feel comfortable voicing their opinion. Studies show that many parents perceived that IEP meetings were structured in a way that excluded them from making contributions to their child's education (Garriott et al., 2000; Harry et al., 1995; Pruitt et al., 1998) and that they sometimes even feel fearful to speak up (Friend & Cook, 2010). Research also shows that a main concern with facilitating IEP meetings is spending too much time on the wrong issue and lacking a solution-focused mindset (Beck & DeSutter, 2020).

## Solution-oriented Discussion

**WHEN:** Throughout the entire IEP meeting.

**WHAT:** Sticking to the agenda topics and guiding the direction of the conversation into a positive light is going to be crucial. Parents report that it is stressful to hear about all of your child's weaknesses and deficits (Goldman & Burke, 2017) and educators word choices can and will impact those feelings. Below are some ways in which you can keep the conversation solution-oriented:

- Keep the focus on the needs of the student
  - When the discussion is focused around the student and less around previous negative experiences or assuming another team members motives, there is less potential for conflict and keeps the meeting running more efficiently (Mueller & Vick, 2019).
- Encourage Parent Participation
  - We want parents to feel engaged and feel like they are fulfilling their important role as a member of this IEP team.

**ACTION STEP:** Ask parents a minimum of 3 open-ended questions.

**TIP:** It might be helpful to have some possible questions written down before the meeting so you do not have to think of them on the spot!

- General Education Teachers should be active participates as well and be encouraged to provide input throughout the meeting
  - Research shows that general education teachers only gave input during 9% of the meeting time (Martin et al., 2006).
- Assign roles to IEP members so you can focus on keeping the discussion solution-oriented.
  - Note taker: Assign someone to take notes throughout the IEP meeting. Discuss with this person what information you are particularly interested in.
    - TIP: Provide a note-taking sheet based off the agenda.
  - Parent Facilitator: Assign someone to monitor the parent's body language and be cognizant of how they parents might be feeling throughout the meeting. This person could be someone who is in charge of checking for parent's understanding if case manager forgets to do so.

## WHY:

Often times when teachers provide their input, they used educational jargon that parents were unlikely able to understand (Daugherty, 2015). Without even intending too, this action in turn can make parents feel inferior, alienated, and disempowered (Salas, 2004; Wellner, 2012; Kalyanpur, & Harry, 2012). Parents add tremendous value to these conversations and are essential members of the IEP teams.

## Avoid Technical Jargon

**WHEN:** Throughout the entirety of the IEP meeting.

**WHAT:** Be conscious of each word and phrase you are choosing to use when explaining concepts to the parents. We have to remember that they do not encounter educational terms in the same way we do.

➤ Limit or avoid using acronyms (Wellner, 2012).

- This technique was identified as an action step to build trust among parents and educators. Parents can feel intimidated and confused when acronyms are used and this causes a challenge when trying to give their full focus in an important meeting (Mereoiu, Abercrombie, & Murray, 2016).

➤ Check for understanding.

- Check in with the parents regularly by asking them if things are making sense or if they have any questions.

**TIP:** It might be helpful to remind team members to try and avoid technical jargon. A good place to do this could be at the Pre-Collaboration Meeting.

**ACTION STEP:** Provide parents with the ‘Special Education Acronym Cheat Sheet’

- Please add any acronyms that may be relevant to your specific case.

## Special Education Acronym Cheat Sheet

504	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
ALJ	Administrative Law Judge
APE	Adapted Physical Education
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
AT	Assistive Technology
AU	Autism (Educational Disability Category)
BIP	Behavior Intervention Plan
CAC	Community Advisory Committee on Special Education
CASE	Community Alliance for Special Education
CBM	Curriculum-based Measurement
DIS	Designated Instruction and Services
DOE	U.S. Department of Education
DOR	Department of Rehabilitation
DREDF	Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
ED	Emotional Disturbance (Educational Disability Category)
ELL	English Language Learners
ESY	Extended School Year
FAPE	Free and Appropriate Public Education
FBA	Functional Behavioral Assessment
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
ID	Intellectual Disability (Educational Disability Category)
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IEE	Independent Educational Evaluation
IEP	Individualized Educational Program
IFSP	Individualized Family Service Plan
IPP	Individual Program Plan (Regional Center)
ITP	Individualized Transition Plan
LEA	Local Education Agency
LI	Language Impairment (Educational Disability Category)
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
OAH	Office of Administrative Hearings
OCR	U.S. Office for Civil Rights
OEO	Office of Equal Opportunity / CDE
OHI	Other Health Impairment (Educational Disability Category)
OSEP	U.S. Office of Special Education Programs / DOE
OSERS	U.S. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Programs
OT/PT	Occupational Therapy/Physical Therapy
PAI	Protection and Advocacy, Inc.
PBIS	Positive Behavior Intervention Supports
PSRS	Procedural Safeguards and Referral Services / CDE
PTI	Parent Training and Information Center
PWN	Prior Written Notice
RSP	Resource Specialist Program
RTI	Response to Intervention
SDC	Special Day Class

SEB	Social-Emotional-Behavior
SELPA	Special Education Local Plan Area
SERR	“Special Education Rights and Responsibilities” book
SES	Socioeconomic Status
SLD	Specific Learning Disability (Educational Disability Category)
SLP	Speech Language Pathologist
SPED	Special Education
YCDD	Young Child with Developmental Delay (Educational Disability Category)

## **POST MEETING**

Action steps to engage in AFTER the IEP takes place

## WHY:

There is a lot of information for parents to take in when sitting through an IEP meeting. It is important for case managers to follow up to ensure proper understanding of what was said at the meeting.

## Post-Meeting Follow Up

**WHEN:** Two to three days after IEP meeting.

**WHAT:** Follow up with the parent after an IEP meeting. This is essential in starting that student's program out with success and building a collaborative home-school partnership.

### TIPS:

- Tell the parent how much you appreciated them being at the IEP meeting
- Share with the parent what you think went well about the meeting
- Ask the parent if there was anything said the meeting that they would like clarified or that they had questions about.
- Ask the parent if there was anything in the IEP document that was confusing.
  - Some parents may not be able to read or comprehend the technical educational language in an IEP document, therefore would be at a disadvantage compared to educators when reviewing the document (Mueller & Vick, 2019).
- Give parents tips for how to navigate the special education world if they are new to it. For example, suggest keeping all important special education documents, like IEP reports, in one binder all together.

**ACTION STEP:** Follow up with the parent within 3 days of the IEP meeting.





## WHY:

In order to engage in effective communication, educators need to start prioritizing learning about their students' families and building that collaborative relationship (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

## Continued Communication

**WHEN:** Consistently as long as the student is on your caseload.

**WHAT:** Determine how often and in what format you can continue communication with the parent. We want this IEP process to be a chance to help build and cultivate a positive, trusting, and lasting relationship between the school and parents.

- Consistency
  - A common theme is parents wish that communication with case managers was more consistent (FOCUS GROUP). Staying in touch with your families on a regular basis helps continue to foster that home-school partnership.
- Open Door Policy
  - We want parents to feel like they can come to you with any question, concern, or celebration. But they will not know or feel that unless we take the action steps to do so. Think about what you can do to foster a positive relationship with the families on your caseload. How can you make them feel more comfortable sharing things about home?
  - TIP: Share a weekly school celebration and ask for a weekly home celebration.
  - TIP: Have multiple means of communication for the parent to contact you (i.e. phone call, email, text- Google Voice)
- Use Parents Suggestions
  - Parents often felt that they would make suggestions in IEP meetings and there would be no follow through or school team member's ideas would take precedent over theirs (Fish, 2009).
  - TIP: Have ideas of how you can directly address the parents' main concerns in the school setting, as well as in the home setting.

**ACTION STEP:** Determine what 'Continued Communication' looks for you.

**TIP:** It would helpful to involve the parent in your determination to get their input of what they would like your communication to look like.

Below are some guiding questions to help you make that determination...

- How often will you reach out to the parent? (daily, weekly, monthly, as needed)
- What format of communication will you use? (phone call, email, send a note home, etc.)

‘Continued Communication’ Form

Our continued partnership is so beneficial is helping STUDENT reach her goals. Thank you so much for communicating with me during the IEP process and I hope we can continue to work together to help STUDENT be successful. I wanted to get your input on what you think that communication can look like.

This is a form  
you would  
send home to  
the parent.

How often would you like to hear from me?

Daily     Weekly     Monthly     Only if there is a concern

What format of communication is best to communicate with you?

Phone Call     Email     Note Home with Student

Are you comfortable with me sharing with the student things we discuss?

Yes     No

I believe it would be beneficial if I received updates from you about how things are going at home about once a month (*you can change as you wish*).

## **FIDELITY CHECK**

Are the intervention action steps being carried out how they intended to be?

## FIDELITY CHECKLIST

\_\_\_\_\_ Complete Facilitation Training before engaging with families initial or annual IEP process.

**Date completed:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Talk to the parents personally before the IEP.

**Date of contact:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Method of communication:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Send home the 'Parent Communication' sheet.

**Date sent home:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Send home the "IEP Team Members" introduction sheet.

**Date sent home:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Hold a pre-collaboration meeting with IEP team school members. (*Optional*)

**Date of meeting:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of IEP Meeting:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Hand out name tags as team members enter the meeting space.

\_\_\_\_\_ Provide an agenda at the beginning of the IEP meeting.

\_\_\_\_\_ Determine and use a visual aid in your IEP meeting.

**Attach a copy or send an electronic copy to the primary investigator**

\_\_\_\_\_ Each team member state a minimum of one strength of the student.

**Please provide a documented list of strengths mentioned by each team member**

\_\_\_\_\_ Ask parents a minimum of 3 questions.

**Question 1:**

**Question 2:**

**Question 3:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Provide parents with the 'Special Education Acronym Cheat Sheet'

\_\_\_\_\_ Follow up with the parent within 3 days of the IEP meeting.

**Date of contact:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Method of communication:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Determine what 'Continued Communication' looks for you

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## VITA

Madison Fritsche was born and raised in St. Louis, MO. After graduating from Luther High School South in 2012, Madison began studying at the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) in Edwardsville IL. In May 2016, Madison graduated as a dual major with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Criminal Justice. Afterwards, Madison continued her studies at SIUE from 2016 to 2018, where she received a Master of Science in Clinical Child and School Psychology. During her time in her Master's program, Madison gained experience working with students and families as a behavior health specialist in Head Start centers in East St. Louis, IL. Madison entered the University of Missouri School Psychology Program in July 2018. During her time as a doctoral student, Madison conducted research and provided psychological services to youth and adults in both school and clinical settings. Madison completed her pre-doctoral internship with St. Louis Special School District in St. Louis, MO in July 2022 and will graduate with her doctorate in School Psychology in August 2022. For the 2022-2023 school year, Madison has obtained a position as a School Psychologist with St. Louis Special School District. She will continue supervision to complete her Postdoctoral hour requirements in hopes of becoming a Licensed Psychologist.