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## Quality communication with parents

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## Quality communication with parents

### Abstract

This literature review looks at quality communication between the parents of children with special needs and school personnel. Advantages and problems with communication will be discussed. Also, discussions will focus on the use of communication between educators and parents of children with special needs over the past five decades. The influence of public laws on communication between these groups will be examined.

In addition, the advantages and problems involved in this communication will be drawn from the literature and guidelines will be identified that are needed for effective communication between educators and parents of children with special needs. Lastly, conclusions and recommendations will be shared concerning how to develop a more effective communication system between these two groups.

**QUALITY COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS**

**A Graduate Research Paper**

**Submitted to the**

**Department of Curriculum and Instruction**

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**Of the Requirement for the Degree**

**Master of Arts in Education**

**With a Major in Early Childhood Education**

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA**

**By**

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Has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in Education.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background

When working with parents to create a caring, educational, and learning environment for students with special needs, good and effective communication is essential. Sicley (1993) stated that “Nearly every major report on schooling has recognized the importance of parents in regards to their child’s learning abilities, and the need for effective communication between parents and teachers” (p.105). Communication is an essential part of any student’s life, especially students with special needs. In the past this belief has not been a popular one. “Historically, educators have often viewed parents as the source of their children’s problems. Advocates of public education in the 1800s argued that public schools were necessary to counteract the negative influence of families” (Ferguson & Ferguson, 1987, p. 347).

Parents were instrumental in developing schools in the early centuries of the country. They provided the climate for the creation of public schools. They formed organizations to raise laws to build schools, and petitioned legislators to pass laws to build, construct, and support public schools. Historically, parental input was sought and encouraged in the early formation of public schools. Unfortunately, the movement to create public schools did not include disabled children. Formulation of public schools was premised on the concept that they were developed for “normal children.” This concept prevailed well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. (Taylor & Thomas, Eds., 2000, p. 7)

During the 1970s, the deinstitutionalization of children began with children who had severe disabilities. When more children with disabilities entered the public school system, mandated expectations for inclusion of children were created. Along with public schools being held accountable for the performance of students with special needs, parents began to be included in educational decision making. Laws such as, *The*

*Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)* and *Public Law (P.L.) 94-142* have changed the role of parental involvement in education. The IDEA mandates that parents are to be involved in all aspects of their children's education. Parents are to be notified in advance of all educational meetings; they are to control the access of their children's educational records, and they can exercise their due process rights under the IDEA. Also, PL 94-142 mandated that communication would occur between parents and school personnel (Michaelis, 1980). Michaelis went on to say that since teachers are no longer the sole resource for educational information, "... it is necessary to communicate frequently with parents and determine how they feel about the little as well as the big things that happen at school" (p. 37).

Turnbull and Turnbull (1997) stated that the IDEA essentially validates parents and their role in their child's education as decision makers. Furthermore, collaboration between parents and educators is essential. Parents have not been viewed as experts concerning their child's education in the past because "... people blamed parents for their children's problems, and professionals saw separation of children from their parents as the best solution" (Sussell, Carr, and Hartman, 1996, p.53). Muscott (2002) wrote that parents have not been used as full partners in children's education. As parents became more involved in the educational process, communication between home and school became more essential. Felber (1997) suggested that working with parents creates a feeling of trust and an opportunity for mutual respect. Learning to value "... the benefits of parental involvement. . . . we will be more successful in creating a supportive classroom environment and using classroom strategies that promote learning" (p. 105).

Educators have begun to see the benefit of using parents as a source of information about children. “Professionals are beginning to listen to the voices of parents, and this respectful approach holds promise for a positive impact on the lives of students with disabilities” (Muscott, 2002, p. 66). Active participation of parents in education allows for collaboration between home and school, which permits teachers to create a more supportive environment and use educational strategies that promote learning. Collaboration between home and school is critical in developing a supportive relationship, for “. . . open communication is the integral component of developing this important collaborative relationship” (Taylor & Thomas, Eds., 2000, p. 11).

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this literature review is to examine the literature concerning the effects of communication between school and parents of children with special needs and to determine what forms of communication are most effective when working with these parents. To accomplish this purpose, the following questions will be addressed:

1. How did working with parents of children with special needs begin?
2. What are the benefits of effective forms of communication?
3. What are some problems with school-parent communication?
4. What guidelines are needed for achieving effective communication with parents of children with special needs?

#### Need for the Study

Effective communication between families and educators is imperative for an appropriate and well rounded educational setting. A team made up of the student, the family of the student, and the educators needs to work together to maintain a successful

learning environment for students with special needs. Historically, parents have been viewed as contributing to the educational problems of children. Parents have been given rights under special education laws, such as PL 94-142, but some educators have not effectively communicated with parents about educational issues. Parents have an intimate knowledge of their children and are able to include background knowledge that could be more beneficial in creating better informed educational settings.

Communication between parents and educators must share this vital information.

Also, "Teachers and parents must communicate to one another their goals for, and expectations of, children . . . to create the best possible environment and facilitate the learning process" (Felber, 1997, p. 20). There has been research on communicating with families, but lack of specifications of effective forms of communication creates a lack of continuity in schools.

### Limitations

The majority of the research examined for this study focused on how to communicate better with parents. There was very little research on how communication could be viewed negatively. One of the limitations of the literature was that some of the literature was not available to this researcher.

### Definitions

The following terms are defined for clarification as they are used in this paper

Collaboration: The joint effort of schools, children, and families to create an environment where mutual goals are agreed upon and achieved, "Collaboration between parents and the professional fosters understanding and provides tools, for accomplishing change and reaching mutual goals" (Rump, 2002, p. 18).

Communication: Discussion between home and school

Deinstitutionalization: Removing students from institutions and educating them within the public school system.

Integration: Educating students with special needs in the general education classroom using general education curriculum.

Special Needs: Students who have disabilities.

PL 94-142: “The 94<sup>th</sup> Congress of the United states passed a bill (#142) that requires the states to accept all children in the public education system. Parents should be active participants in planning ways to meet the needs of children who may have difficulty learning” (Michaelis, 1980, p. 221).

Family-professional conferences: Conferences in which educators, speech and language providers, occupation and physical therapists, education agency members, and family member meet to discuss the educational, physical, and speech needs of a child. The conferences are generally held 2 or 3 times per year.

Home life situations: The environment that may be encountered when entering the home of a child.

## CHAPTER 2

### IDENTIFYING EFFECTIVE WAYS OF COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

Communication assumes many forms. "It is important to explore and determine the type and extent of communication that families want" (Muscott, 2002, p. 66).

Communication is not a one size fits all program, therefore being flexible is necessary. Families are comfortable with communication from the school when their concerns and needs are discussed. Sicley (1993), and Jayanthi, Bursuck, Wpstein, and Polloway (1997) indicated that a more informative, personal, and direct approach is useful for parents. It is also more practical for meeting the needs of students.

The back and forth communication with the parent required by Public Law (P.L.) 94-142 is more comprehensive than a carefully marked report card sent home four times a year and returned the next day with a parent's signature on the back. The communication required for consent is dynamic; it must flow with the parent's moment-to-moment concerns. Since the teacher no longer stands in loco parentis, it is necessary to communicate frequently with parents and determine how they feel about the little as well as the big things that occur at school. (Michaelis, 1980, p. 37)

The educational system can be frustrating for parents and children with special needs, but "... frustration is reduced when parents feel that they know what is going on and that they can take an active role in helping their child" (Sussell, Carr, & Hartman, 1996, p. 56). When communication is positive, productive collaboration is the outcome. Martin and Hagan-Burke (2002) quoted Jensen & Potter (1990) who wrote, "... poor communication may result in parental misunderstandings and stand in the way of an effective home-school relationship" (p. 62).

Quality communication is desired by all parties. Thought should be given to what is written in the communication. The form of communication is important, too. There are different methods of communication that may be used in a school. The following

effective forms of communicating with families are described below: traveling notebook, weekly journals, telephone calls, newsletters, home visits, and parent conferences.

One method of communication is the traveling notebook. A notebook is sent between home and school detailing results of the day and night for the student. "It is intended to communicate to parents that they are an integral part of their child's education" (Williams & Cartledge, 1997, p. 31). Williams and Cartledge also stressed that communication be made daily. Consistency, persistence, and caring demonstrate the belief in the procedures that follow. Regular communication is a feature of the notebook system of communication. The frequency of the notebook use is such that parents and teachers are able to communicate easily and in a timely manner. Efforts to communicate must be thoughtful and meaningful to keep parents engaged in their child's education (Williams & Cartledge, 1997). A notebook form of communication can be non-threatening for families because it is not done face to face. The daily communication ". . . is reserved for those children who seem to need it or who can benefit from it; however, it can be done with a class. . . ." (Kroth, 1975, p.76). In this respect, James (1996) stated that communication does not need to be long. Simple statements from school or home can express positive suggestions. When the communication is such that a notebook would not sufficiently convey the information, another form of communication should be used.

Some families are not comfortable using a daily notebook; therefore, a weekly journal may be used. The journals give the educator an opportunity to inform parents about the weekly progress of the child. They are able to journal comments, grades,

questions, and concerns. Parents also have a responsibility. They are responsible for corresponding once a week through a signature, or with comments.

“Telephone calls and letters from school personnel usually strike fear in the hearts of parents”(Kroth, 1975, p. 75). Kroth (1975) and Taylor (2000) both, in separate articles, indicated that while negative information may need to be conveyed, educators should write positive comments as well. Phone calls should be made when children are doing well, and not confined to times when they are not doing as well. If parents and teachers decide to use a weekly phone call for progress updates, a time should be agreed upon. “The advantage to this method of communication is that much can be discussed in a relatively short time”(James, 1996, p.4). Feedback is immediate when talking on the phone, there is no lag time in response, and clarifications can be made on the spot.

The monthly newsletter is a tool used to inform parents of special events and school issues (Taylor, 2000). It is a forum where the school can provide families with important and timely information. The newsletter is a form that the teacher can share information with families in a non-threatening manner. E-mail is another resource that can share information. When all parties have accessibility to the internet, communication can be shared by using written communication, for it is one of the best ways to provide a continuous correspondence between teachers and parents (Williams & Cartledge, 1997).

Parents and teachers benefit from face to face communication because issues can be discussed directly. Home visits give parents a comfortable place to communicate with school personnel, for parents are more likely to take the lead in a personal environment (Michaelis, 1980). Sicley (1993) noted that materials and instructional strategies should

be used cooperatively on a more personal level and should be cultivated between the teacher and the parent. One reason for this change is the following:

Communication with the parent in the home setting tends to reverse the dominant roles and gives the role of speaker more naturally to the parent. This setting can make it easier for the parent to express ideas or concerns. Gathering the history of the child's developmental experiences can give the parent an opportunity to tell about the child. It is also an efficient way to gather more assessment material about the child. (Michaelis, 1980, p. 155)

Home visits should be set on a schedule in which all parties will feel comfortable. Home visits can coincide with family-professional conferences.

Family-professional conferences are held two to three times a year. Conferences are a means of sharing information. Professionals and families work together to enhance the learning potential of students. "Because of the many potential benefits of family-professional conferences, conferences should not be limited to the beginning and end of the school year"(Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990, p. 177). Conferences can develop a partnership between home and school that can support student performance.

Parents and educators bring different perspectives to the educational partnership and because of this, they must work together to agree on the manner of communication that would be beneficial to both parties. Parents who feel intimidated meeting in person can choose to communicate in writing, through the daily notebook, weekly journals, or e-mail. "Whatever method is used, you should recognize that family preferences may vary over time, and therefore, will need to be monitored and reidentified on a somewhat regular basis"(Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990, p. 175).

Parents can influence student attitudes. When parents feel connected to the learning environment, their children tend to have more positive attitudes toward their educational experiences (Muscott, 2002). When communication is open and honest, educators and

families are able to share information more freely and willingly. Through open communication, “. . . a relationship develops over time, with trust” (Bennett, 2006, p. 27). Bennett also added that families deserve to be heard, understood, and respected. By having an open line of communication, respect can be earned by all involved. Parents are partners and by working with them, educators can help the child outside of the school building.

## CHAPTER 3

## PROBLEMS OF COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

Communication is not a guaranteed success. "Families have different concerns and needs, and a *one size fits all* system of communication may not be appropriate. Flexibility is the key"(Hadden & Fowler, 1997, p. 38). Individual needs are to be considered before a form of communication is determined. Often, teachers take into consideration only their needs when communicating with parents. The needs between the family and the teacher may be vastly different. All parties need to work together to come to a consensus on a form of communication.

Communication problems are caused by misunderstandings between people. "Communication breakdowns represent a faulty system rather than faulty people"(Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990, p. 146). When there is a problem with communication, "... the emphasis is on changing their interactional patterns rather than changing one individual or the other" (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990, p. 146). There is a need to identify issues that contributed to a breakdown in communication, such as a parent who does not have a phone or are unable to read a daily log. In other cases, personality clashes or a misunderstanding of a situation may be the cause of the communication breakdown. "It takes considerable effort to establish positive relationships between teachers and parents of children with learning disabilities" (Felber, 1997, p. 20).

A daily or weekly written communication such as a log may be the most convenient form for the teacher to use. It can be a manner in which a teacher is able to jot down successes, concerns, or questions as they come up through out the day. However, some

parents may be unable to read English. If a parent is unable to read the notes that come home, it is an ineffectual form of communication for the parents. While the teacher is communicating to the parents, the parents may not be able to read or to understand the language what is being shared.

Even if parents prefer a daily log for communication purposes, it may not be possible for the teacher to use the form of communication. When a large number of students are in a class, the teacher may not have time during the school day to write a note in all of the logs. If time is a factor, the teacher and the family must find another more effective form of communication.

Another form of communication that is used on a daily or weekly basis is the phone call. This form of communication is where teachers and families are able to communicate directly. Questions and concerns are discussed without being communicated through a written manner. One disadvantage to phone calls is that some parents may not have a phone in their home, and therefore communication is not made. Another disadvantage is “. . . some parents work in offices or businesses that frown upon, or forbid, personal telephone calls” (Beverdorsf-James, 1996, p. 81). A third disadvantage to phone calls discussed by Beverdorsf-James (1996) is that there may not be a mutually agreed upon time that phone calls can be made. Work schedules play a large part in determining when people are available to talk. If parents are at work during the evening hours and they are unable to accept phone calls, then teachers are unable to talk to parents. Another concern is that teachers may be unable to call during the school day because of teaching responsibilities. Yet, this may be the only time that parents are

available to receive phone calls. If any of these disadvantages are apparent, phone calls are not a useful form of communication.

Home visits are another form of direct communication where families are not required to visit the school for a meeting. Teachers make a visit to the home to meet with the family. Through home visits, teachers are able to share pertinent information with parents in the home where parents feel more comfortable. They are able to communicate face-to-face in a neutral place for families. There are concerns that go along with a home visit. "Conditions in some communities do not make home visits an attractive option to many teachers" (Taylor, 2000, p. 95). Home life situations may be such that it is not safe to enter the home alone or even accompanied by another adult. Teachers may choose to enter homes in spite of poor conditions to ensure that information is shared.

When you do meet with parents even in situations that can be less than adequate, there is a need to use appropriate communication rather than blaming one another. By using effective communication skills the meeting is more likely to achieve the purpose for the benefit of the children. Unless this is done, a breakdown is likely to occur.

With a communication breakdown, placing blame is easy to do without considering all aspect of the breakdown. The tendency is for each party to place blame on the other. How a problem is dealt with often determines if communication can be repaired. If both parties attempt to repair the breakdown, communication can be restored by doing the following:

By engaging in mutual problem solving, both parties have the opportunity to express and fulfill their needs. Furthermore, a willingness to share responsibility for breakdowns in communication maximizes the probability that families and professionals can work toward mutual solutions in a nonthreatening and nondefensive manner. (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990, p. 146)

Communication problems arise between people and not within people. Changing interaction patterns is necessary when there are communication breakdowns. "The process of confronting and solving problems is difficult and painful, yet when we solve problems, we learn and grow. . . mutual problem solving between families and professionals is ideal" (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990, p. 146).

Educators who work to establish good communication with families must work to find a solution when conflicts arise. An important skill for educators is active listening. "Active listening includes the use of silence, paraphrasing, acknowledging without judging, clarifying, and empathy" (Muscott, 2002, p.68). Educators need to ". . . keep in mind that working with parents is a process. It takes time to develop rapport and trust and productive relationships"(Williams & Cartledge, 1997, p.33). Lake and Billingsley (2000) stated that too often educators focus on the weaknesses of students when they need to look at the whole child. Educators must look at all aspects of the child and share positive and negative aspects of the skills that children exhibit. Communication is a give and take process. Teachers must listen to parental needs, wants, and concerns about children while parents must listen to successes, failures, and concerns of teachers. Parents who hear only negative information about their child may become resistant to communicating with educators.

Children need to be viewed as individuals. Educators need to have an understanding of the unique needs of each student.

When parents spoke of differences between their view of their own child and a school's view, they offered two conclusions that might explain how a parent and a school could view a child differently. The first conclusion was a perception by parents that the school did not see a child as an individual with unique strengths and abilities. The second conclusion was that the school personnel described a

child from a deficit-model perspective, which parents received unfavorably. (Lake & Billingsly, 2000, p. 244)

When such problems arise, Lake and Billingsly (2000) stated that a lack of problem-solving knowledge and strategies escalated conflicts. Problem solving skills can help continue quality communication between parents and educators.

## CHAPTER 4

### GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Quality communication is an important aspect of parent-teacher relationships. In order for communication to be effective, a set of guidelines is necessary for creating quality communication. The following guidelines will aid in developing quality communication.

1. Teachers should build a sense of rapport with families.

Communication is a shared learning process. “Professionals are beginning to listen to the voices of parents, and this respectful approach holds promise for a positive impact on the lives of students with disabilities” (Muscott, 2002, p.66).

Quality communication is built with rapport. According to Michaelis (1980), when families believe there is support and understanding from the school, they are more likely to discuss issues more openly with educators. Swick (2003) stated that trust-building is essential to meaningful communication, and he named four communication behaviors that are necessary for quality communication. The behaviors given by Swick are the following: an approachable person, who is sensitive, and is flexible, and dependable. Using an approachable manner while communicating allows families and teachers to work in a more honest and open environment.

Educators and administrators must nurture a feeling of acceptance and understanding. Educators must be open to understanding different family dynamics, remember families interact differently and work together for the benefit of the children. By recognizing differences in parenting styles, educators are able to assess

each situation on an individual basis. “Professionals cannot make the family do things their way. Pressure hampers relationship building” (Bennett, 2006, p. 27). Educators must listen to families and reflect on what they needs. Muscott (2002) stated that “. . . special educators must understand and value the uniqueness of each family that they work with” (p. 66).

Teachers must be willing to work with families in an open manner, just as they expect families to work with them. If families believe that teachers are not upfront with them, they are not going to develop a connection with teachers and therefore, parents will not feel comfortable communicating their needs, wants, and concerns to them.

2. Develop guidelines for quality communication so that all parties are comfortable in following them.

Communication is not a one size fits all package. Hadden and Fowler (1997) stressed that communication methods must be chosen with care and all parties must understand the process and methods of communication. “In relation to parent-teacher and family-school-community partnerships, communication is the critical factor” (Swick, Ed., 2003, p.11). With collaboration between home and school being mandated by law, educators must find a way to communicate with families that works for both parties. According to Hodgdon (2000), different philosophical beliefs must be considered when communication between the home and school occurs. The needs are different, and those needs must be taken into consideration when a communication form is chosen.

Support for the home and educational setting is very important. Goals set in the home as well as at school can be supported through quality communication. Whether

a daily notebook, weekly notebook, or a weekly or a monthly phone call is utilized for communication, the goals for both the home and school can be met as long as all parties support the communication process. Families and educators must understand the needs of each other for communication to be optimally accepted.

3. Choose communication methods with care so that they are appropriate for the needs that must be met.

Communication is a shared learning process. Communication needs to be done efficiently and often in a simple manner. Educators must understand that students and families handle situations differently in different settings. The form of communication that is used must be made appropriate for the task that must be accomplished.

“Exceptional partnerships respect the uniqueness of families” (Muscott, 2002, p.67). According to Turnbull & Turnbull (1990), family preference for the manner of communication may change over time. Because of this, communication needs should be monitored and adjusted when it is necessary. Educators must remember to keep their own needs in mind as well, for teachers must remember to “. . . not give families the option to choose a daily communication strategy if you are unwilling, or unable, to communicate that frequently” (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990, p. 175).

Communication efforts must be appropriate and efficient (Hodgdon, 2000). As most parents want their child’s teachers to share with them performance in school (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990). Parents need to hear more than negative messages about their children. The communication form must be such that parents are able to learn more than the negative aspects concerning their child. “If you want parents to hear you, somehow you will have to say what you want to say in the way they want to

hear it” (Michaelis, 1980, p. 176). Educators and families must choose a form of communication that will allow for both strengths and needs to be communicated in a timely and effective manner.

4. Parent input must be included in all academic decision making.

Parent involvement has changed over time. “Parents of children with disabilities are not as actively involved as they were historically” (Taylor, 2000, p.9). Basic family structures have changed; therefore availability of family members for meetings does not always coincide with teacher availability. P.L. 94-142 mandated that parents were to be included in all academic decision making for their children. Teacher’s must take into consideration parental considerations when making academic decisions.

Communicating openly with parents will help to gain important information from parents for academic considerations. Teachers must actively seek to involve parents in their child’s academic needs. Parents often feel a disconnect with what is happening in school; therefore teachers must seek ways to inform parents of activities, concerns, and accomplishments of children through out the year so parents are well informed.

## CHAPTER 5

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of quality communication and to present guidelines for using quality communication. The paper addressed four questions to accomplish this purpose:

1. How did working with parents of children with special needs begin?

Parental involvement in regular education programming began with the creation of schools. Parental input for students with special needs was required during the 1970's when the deinstitutionalization of children began. *The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)* and *P.L. 94-142* also required educators to work with parents and students to create quality educational programs for students with special needs. Communication between parents and educators was mandated through P.L. 94-142 (Michaelis, 1980).

2. What are the benefits of effective forms of communication?

Benefits of quality communication have affected quality education for students with special needs. There are many forms of communication. Working together to identify the most effective form of communication ensures that families and teachers are being informed of important information. Communication forms may change as the needs of the family or teacher changes (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990). With open communication, trust is developed and a relationship is developed where families feel comfortable to speak and discuss concerns and feel respected when giving their opinions and suggestions (Bennett, 2006). Parents and teachers have different

perspectives that they are able to share about the child. When a parent take an active role in the education of their child, the communication with the teacher assists in informing the parent of what is happening in their child's education and this can help to reduce the frustration that the parents may feel (Sussell, Carr, & Hartman, 1996).

### 3. What are some problems with school-parent communication?

Although parents and educators have identifies benefits to quality communication, parents and teachers may experience challenging obstacles with communicating. There is not a one size fits all form of communication (Hadden & Fowler, 1997). Parents and teachers must work together to find an agreed upon communication style. There are different needs for all people involved in communicating together. Time for completing written communication and phone calls is one problem of communicating. If parents don't feel that they are respected by the teacher, then the parent is not going to feel comfortable talking to the teacher about their concerns or share their questions. Blame can be placed when there is a miscommunication or a communication breakdown. It can be difficult to confront problems. It is necessary to use mutual problem solving to solve problems (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990).

### 4. What guidelines are needed for achieving effective communication with parents of children with special needs?

Guidelines are necessary when attempting to form quality communication practices. The first step is to build a sense of rapport with families. Families who feel that they are supported as well as understood are more willing to be more open with their issues (Michaelis, 1980). Special educators must understand that each family is different, therefore the needs of each family will also be unique (Muscott,

2002). The next step is to develop guidelines for communication that all parties are comfortable with. Philosophical beliefs must be considered when communication occurs (Hodgdon, 2000). Different needs for communication must be taken into consideration. The third step is to choose communication methods with care. The method of communication should meet the needs for both the parents and the teacher. Preferences for communication may change over time; therefore the needs for communication must be monitored. Teachers must keep their needs in mind as well as the parental needs. If a communication form is not beneficial for all, then the form of communication must be re-evaluated. The communication form needs to allow for information to be delivered in a timely and effective manner. Finally, parent input must be included in all academic decision making. Parents often feel that they do not have the knowledge or understanding of what is going on in their child's education. Teachers must find a way to inform parents and to get them involved in their child's academic life and decision making process.

### Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from this study:

1. Quality communication is essential to quality education for students with special needs.
2. Quality communication can be accomplished with different forms of delivery.
3. Communication needs are different for everyone and consideration should be taken when considering the form of communication.
4. Parents and teachers have different knowledge about students that is important for educational consideration.

5. Communication should be open and flexible.
6. The success of communication depends on the willingness of both families and teachers.

### Recommendations

Based on the review of the literature, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Educators should make communication with parents a priority.
2. Educators should work with parents to find a form of communication that is effective and efficient for both parties.
3. Communication methods should be reviewed as needed.
4. Evaluate different ways of communication that are acceptable to teachers and parents such as: traveling notebook, weekly journals, weekly journals, telephone calls, newsletters, home visits, and parent conferences.

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