

PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION DELIVERY SYSTEM IN  
EAU CLAIRE, WISCONSIN

by

Mark Toshio Inouye

A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the  
Master of Science - Education Degree  
With a Major in

School Psychology

Approved: 2 Semester Credits

---

Investigation Advisor

The Graduate College  
University of Wisconsin-Stout  
May, 2000

University of Wisconsin-Stout  
Menomonie, WI 54751

ABSTRACT

<u>Inouye</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>T.</u>
(Writer)	(Last Name)	(First)
		(Initial)

Parental Perceptions of the Special Education Delivery System  
(Title)

in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

<u>School Psychology</u>	<u>Jacalyn Weissenburger</u>	<u>May 2000</u>	<u>43</u>
(Graduate Major)	(Research Advisor)	(Month/Year)	(No. of pages)

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association  
(Name of Style Manual Used in this Study)

Parent satisfaction and involvement with special education programs are two important topics in the field of education today. Because of the steadily increasing legal rights and responsibilities of parents, districts need to identify areas of concern within their schools, as well as understand the ideas and views of the school's parents regarding the delivery of special education services. If certain programs, schools, or grade levels are not viewed favorably, it is important for educators to know why and attempt to initiate positive change.

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of parents related to the Eau Claire Area School District's special education delivery system. This study was done through the analysis of survey data collected by the school district in

1999. 267 parents of children with special education needs responded to a survey sent out as an addition to a special education newsletter. This survey data was used to determine their level of satisfaction and isolate any significant differences in their perceptions related to their child's disability type or educational level. Results indicate that parents of children with Speech/Language disabilities were significantly more satisfied than parents of children with other disabilities. In addition, results reveal that parent satisfaction decreased as the educational level of their child increased.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to take a moment and give credit to all of the individuals who helped make this paper possible. First, I would like to thank Jacalyn Weissenburger, my thesis advisor and professor, for her considerable contributions to my education and this study. Her support and assistance have been continuous and essential for the culmination of this project. Secondly, I would like to thank Christine Ness for her valuable assistance in the analysis of the considerable amount of data. Thanks are also owed to the Eau Claire Area School District, for their contribution of the data. I would also like to thank my family for their love and support throughout my life and educational journey.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife Katie for her love, support, encouragement, and patience throughout this lengthy process. She helped make all of this possible.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>List of Tables.....</b>	<b>vi</b>
 Chapter	 Page
1 <b>Introduction.....</b>	01
Statement of the Problem.....	04
2 <b>Review of the Literature.....</b>	06
Parent Involvement.....	06
Parent Attitudes about Inclusion.....	09
3 <b>Methodology.....</b>	15
Participants and Procedures.....	15
Questionnaire.....	15
Data Analysis.....	16
4 <b>Results.....</b>	18
5 <b>Discussion.....</b>	22
Limitations.....	25
 <b>References.....</b>	 27
 <b>Appendix A: Eau Claire Special Education Survey.....</b>	 39
<b>Appendix B: Survey Instructions.....</b>	42

## List of Tables

### Table

1. Respondent Demographic Information.....	29
2. Item by Item Analysis.....	30
3. Satisfaction: Quality of Special Education Services....	32
4. Satisfaction According to Disability Type.....	32
5. Inclusion Attitudes According to Disability Type.....	34
6. Satisfaction According to Educational Level.....	34
7. Inclusion Attitudes According to Educational Level.....	37
8. SPL Educational Level Analysis.....	37

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

Parental involvement and satisfaction with special education programs have become very important considerations in the field of special education today. According to Green and Shinn (1994), "Parents are meant to play an important role as advocates for their children in the special education process" (p. 269). The parent's role in the education of their child is of vast importance, and their legal rights and responsibilities within this context have steadily increased over the last decade. Because of this, districts need to be able to identify what services are valued and any areas of need that exist within their school. They also need to attend to the needs of the parents and the children they serve.

One of the primary issues in the delivery of special education services is inclusion. Inclusion is considered to be one of the more controversial and widely discussed topics in the field of education today. Since the 1975 passage of Public Law 94-142, and the resulting Regular Education Initiative (REI), the advantages and disadvantages of inclusion have been widely discussed.

Inclusion can be interpreted in a variety of ways. According to Crockett and Kauffman (1998), there are several different models of inclusion. Full inclusion involves educating all special education students in a general education

environment, often with the elimination of separate special education programs. Partial inclusion seeks to bring each student into the general education classroom to the greatest extent possible. However, in this instance, students with disabilities are not always in the general education classroom full time.

There is considerable disagreement in the literature among educators and parents over what type of inclusion is best for special education children. It is this disagreement which makes the issue so controversial and widely discussed.

Legislation also has focused the educational community on placing and teaching students with special education needs in the least restrictive environment. In 1990, both the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) resulted in increased sensitivity to the needs of students with disabilities.

It was not just students and schools that educational legislation affected; parental involvement was also addressed. Parents began to become more actively involved in their children's education in 1965 with the establishment of Head Start. Head Start was one of the first educational programs that included parents on decision making committees and counsels (Berger, 1991). Throughout the 1970's, following the lead of Head Start, other federally funded educational programs began to include parents on their boards. The passage of Public Law 94-



142 in 1975 made including parents of special needs children in the development of the IEP mandatory.

In 1990, IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act) was passed. IDEA reaffirmed several parental rights and strengthened others. According to IDEA, parents had the right to inspect and review all of their child's records, be a part of the team that developed their child's Individual Education Plan (IEP), and appeal, or request an independent evaluation, concerning any school decision regarding their child. IDEA encouraged parents to become more involved in the educational decisions related to their son or daughter.

IDEA was re-authorized in 1997, and parental rights were significantly expanded. IDEA now requires the solicitation of parent involvement in the evaluation process. In addition, parents have been given the right to be part of the group making any eligibility or educational placement decisions (NICHCY, 1997). Considerably more emphasis has been placed on parental participation, school accountability, and the collaboration of school professionals with parents.

Because of the new emphasis and focus on parent involvement, many schools are increasingly faced with the need to evaluate how parents of special education students in their district view their special education programs. Evaluating the perceptions of parents is important for several reasons. First, parents hold the primary responsibility for the development of their children. As such, their views should be regarded as

crucially important. Second, information from parents can be used to develop a more effective and parent-friendly educational system. If certain programs, schools, or grade levels are not viewed favorably by parents, it is important for the school to know why. After feedback is provided, school districts will be able to initiate change in order to improve parental satisfaction. Third, involving parents in the decision making process will increase their involvement, as required by law. Finally, in this age of limited funding, program evaluation by parents may be helpful to convince others of the usefulness and effectiveness of exemplary programs (McNaughton, 1994).

#### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine, through surveying the parents of special education children in the Eau Claire Area School District, the perceptions of the parents related to inclusion and the delivery of special education services within that district. Several questions guided this study. First, how satisfied are parents overall? Second, how satisfied are the parents in relation to grade level? Third, how satisfied are they in view of their child's disability? Finally, what attitudes and beliefs do these parents have concerning inclusion?

Information from this study will allow the Eau Claire school district to evaluate its current special education program. This information also may allow other area schools to

gain knowledge related to the perceptions of parents regarding inclusion and the delivery of special education services.

## CHAPTER 2

## Review of the Literature

A number of issues are related to parent satisfaction and involvement with school programs. This literature review will discuss various aspects concerning parental satisfaction and involvement in education. First, it will look into the history of parental involvement in the education of children. The involvement of parents in education today, particularly with regard to special education, also will be addressed. Second, parental satisfaction and their attitudes concerning education, special education, and inclusion will be addressed.

Parent Involvement

Parents have not always been significantly involved in the educational decisions surrounding their children. According to Berger (1991), there was very little parent involvement in school based decisions involving their children prior to the 1960's. In the 1960's, however, several key developments served to change this lack of participation.

First, in 1965 Head Start was established, and parents were called on to be members of community and policy committees involving their children. According to Berger (1991), this "inclusion of parents offered insight into their desires and needs, and empowered parents to make decisions" (p. 215). A second development leading to increased involvement was the

increasing cultural diversity in the United States. The idea that some children come from "culturally depraved" families was challenged, and children started to be viewed as having their own valuable culture (Berger, 1991).

The 1970's brought about further increases in parental involvement as governmental programs initiated in the 1960's flourished. Most federally funded educational programs began to make parent participation on their boards mandatory. Legislation also furthered the involvement and rights of parents. Public Law 94-142, adopted in 1975, gave parents considerable additional rights. According to Dettmer, Dyck, and Thurston (1996), the intent of this law was "to ensure the educational partnership of home and school, not just to provide a rubber stamp of school decisions" (p. 284). Indeed, PL 94-142 provided the parents of handicapped children "the right to due process, prior notice and concert, access to records, and participation in decision making" (Dettmer et al., 1996, p. 284).

In the 1980's, the idea of parent involvement in schools was further bolstered. Berger (1991) states, "Support for home-school collaboration came from both public agencies and professional educators" (p. 216). The importance of parents in education was finally being recognized. For example, in 1988, one educator stated that reading development begins in the home, not in the school (Berger, 1991).

In 1990, with the passage of IDEA, parental rights were reaffirmed and expanded. According to IDEA, parents had the

right to inspect and review all of their child's records. Second, parents could choose to be part of the team that developed their child's Individual Education Plan (IEP). Finally, parents could appeal any school decision regarding their child. They also could obtain an independent evaluation. IDEA provided considerably more emphasis on transition services for children over the age of 16. It also served to encourage increased participation within the community by children with disabilities and their families (Dettmer et al., 1996). With this, parents became increasingly involved in the educational decisions surrounding their son or daughter.

When IDEA was re-authorized in 1997, these parental rights were significantly expanded. In addition to the above, several aspects were added. According to NICHCY (National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities), IDEA now mandates that, "Parent input shall now be *solicited* during the evaluation process. As members of their child's IEP team, parents are also involved in the review of existing evaluation data during the initial evaluation and any reevaluation of their child [*italics added*]" (1997, p. 1). In addition, parents are entitled to be part of the decision making group regarding eligibility or educational placement decisions. In essence, considerably more emphasis is now being placed on parental participation, school accountability, and the collaboration of school professionals with parents than ever before.

Parent Attitudes About Inclusion

Inclusion is one of the most primary and controversial issues in the delivery of special education services today. Crockett and Kauffman (1998) state that special education's "hottest topic over the past decade has been *where*, not *how*, special education students should be taught" (p. 74, italics in original). Indeed, since the 1975 passage of Public Law 94-142, and the resulting Regular Education Initiative (REI), inclusion has taken a prominent place in today's educational system.

Part of the controversy involves the fact that inclusion can take several forms. Crockett and Kauffman (1998) describe the different ways inclusion may be interpreted. Full inclusion involves the education of all special education students in a general education environment, often with the elimination of separate special education programs. Partial inclusion seeks to bring each student into the general education classroom to the greatest extent possible, based on the needs of the child. Within this system, the student is given a continuum of services ranging from in-class support to resource room assistance. A program simply described as "inclusive" may be very different from setting to setting (Crockett & Kauffman, 1998).

There is considerable disagreement in the literature and among educators concerning the implementation of inclusion for special education children. Tichenor and Piechura-Couture (1998) state that "while the principle of inclusion is now widely accepted, the practice of inclusion has only recently taken

center stage" (p. 471). Various professional organizations, including the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, the National Parent Network on Disabilities, and the Council for Exceptional Children, have issued differing position statements regarding inclusion (Gibb & Young, 1998). According to Gibb and Young (1998), "this diversity of opinion has been typical of the inclusion controversy" (p. 244).

While there is a large diversity of opinion among organizations, educators, and researchers, one of the more important questions regarding inclusion is, "What do parents think concerning this issue?" Because of the key role parents play in the educational decisions for their children, their attitudes and perceptions are vitally important (Gibb & Young, 1998).

According to Gibb and Young (1998), parent perceptions and attitudes concerning inclusion have been mixed. Some parents feel that full inclusion is appropriate, while others believe the needs of their child cannot be met in such a setting.

These different perceptions and attitudes might be accounted for by understanding what parents believe are the most important skills for their children to master, and where they believe those skills are best developed (Palmer, Widaman, & Borthwick-Duffy, 1998). Thus, parents most concerned with the prospect of socialization might favor inclusive class placements for their special education children in order to develop their social skills. Parents more concerned with the remediation of



academic skills may view a continuum of services, where they might receive individual attention at times, as most appropriate. Palmer et al. (1998) state, "consideration of the complex dynamics underlying parents preferences regarding inclusive placement options underscores the need to encourage family involvement when considering such programs for an individual child" (p. 280).

These different inclusive perceptions can be exemplified by the position statements of various organizations. While the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps exhibits "unqualified enthusiasm" for full inclusion, the Counsel for Learning Disabilities mentions concern that inclusionary practices do not provide appropriate services for LD students (Vaughn and Schumm, 1995).

A number of studies also show differences in perceptions. Vaughn and Schumm (1995) state that, "Although consensus certainly does not exist, the benefits of inclusion are touted with greater enthusiasm by parents and professionals concerned with individuals with severe disabilities than they are by those whose primary interests are in learning disabilities and behavior disorders" (p. 265).

Ryndak, Downing, Jacqueline, and Morrison (1995) completed structured in-home interviews with the parents of fully included, severely impaired students. 13 parents participated, of which, nine had children who had been in self-contained settings at one time. Interview results showed that "perceptions of the impact

of having their children included in general education classes were overwhelmingly positive" (Ryndak et al. p.153). Parents described many benefits. These included social skills, communication, interaction, behavior, and academic skills. According to the parents, however, the most significant benefits were found in the acceptance of their child by others, and being a part of a normal classroom environment. It appears that the social aspect of learning may take priority.

In a study by Green and Shinn (1994), 21 parents of elementary school LD students were asked, "How much would it help [your] child to be placed in a regular classroom for reading right now?" Over half of the parents endorsed the most negative response. However, the reason for this reluctance to reintegrate appeared to be primarily related to the features of the special education classroom (increased individual attention, understanding teachers), not necessarily the improvement of achievement outcomes. In this study, parents stressed "themes of individual attention, characteristics of the teachers, and increased self-esteem in their children" as important considerations (p. 278).

Other research has indicated that inclusion is generally favored by parents. Lowenbraun, Madge, and Affleck (1990) studied the attitudes of parents regarding the Integrated Classroom Model (ICM). The ICM classroom generally includes 8 special education students and 16 general education students. The special education students include those who are "learning

disabled, mildly mentally retarded, or seriously behavior disordered" (Lowenbraun et al., p. 37). Such students are educated in the ICM classroom for the entire day. Lowenbraun et al. (1990) surveyed 41 parents of special education students and 93 parents of general education students with children in an ICM. They discovered that among general education parents, a vast majority were very satisfied or satisfied, and that 65% of these parents would choose an ICM classroom again. Special education parents also viewed ICM classroom placements very positively, and 87% of them would choose such a placement if given the choice. Special education parents also were grouped into those whose children had previous resource room experience and those who did not. Those with previous resource room experience believed that while integrated and resource classroom placements are equally effective for academic growth, the integrated classroom was better in promoting the development of self-esteem and social skills.

It seems that there is no universal parent belief regarding inclusion. Garrick-Duhaney and Salend (2000) indicate that parent perspectives regarding inclusion are varied, and that even though many parents report positive results from inclusion, others had concerns about the possible negative effects. Indeed, Palmer et al. (1998) state that "it can not be assumed that all parents whose children demonstrate significant disabilities, or any other characteristic, share the same values regarding the school's role or curricular emphasis" (p. 280). Rather, parent

satisfaction with inclusionary efforts may grow out of individual characteristics and beliefs regarding how best their specific child can be educated given his or her disability.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology

#### Participants and Procedure

Surveys were mailed to 1,295 adult special education students and parents of children in the Eau Claire special education program. 269 surveys were returned to the district, comprising a response rate of 21%.

This survey (see appendix A) was mailed as part of an Eau Claire's special education newsletter. It is published at least three times yearly. Recipients were encouraged to complete the ten minute survey, as it was "a way for you to voice your opinion on certain issues that affect your child." They were also told that answering the survey questions would assist the district in the assessment of their inclusionary practices, as well as provide them with information to make the IEP (Individual Education Program) process better. A postage paid envelope was provided for the survey to be returned.

#### **Questionnaire**

The questionnaire used in this study was developed by the Eau Claire Area School district. The first part of the survey requested that the parents indicate the disability category of their child. The options given included: Learning Disability, Cognitive Disability, Emotional Disability, Speech and Language, Deaf/Hard of Hearing, and Other. The survey next asked about the

educational level of the child. Options included: Early Childhood, Elementary School, Middle School, and High School. Demographic information for the survey respondents is reported in Table 1.

After these descriptive questions, parents were asked to respond to a series of questions regarding special education and inclusion. Most of the items were formatted on a five point Lickert scale, ranging from Very Dissatisfied or Strongly Disagree (5), to Very Satisfied or Strongly Agree (1). Seven questions asked about special education and IEP services. An eighth question on transition was included for parents with children over the age of 14. Parents were also asked to respond to 11 questions related to inclusion. Further, they also were provided with space to share written comments.

### Data Analysis

For the purposes of this study, questionnaire descriptive information involving disability type and educational level were obtained. This was done by computing frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations (when applicable). A one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted for each survey item to determine what significant differences existed between groups. If significant differences were indicated, a Bonferroni post hoc procedure was also completed to isolate specific group differences. An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests.

The data was analyzed according to overall satisfaction, satisfaction according to educational level, as well as satisfaction by disability type. Due to the large number of unique responses concerning disability type, returned surveys were classified into eight groups reflecting different disability categories. Group one (n = 57) consisted of respondents who checked Speech/Language (SPL) or SPL/Other. Group two (n = 15) consisted of parents who identified their children as both Learning Disabled (LD) and Emotionally disabled (LD/ED, LD/ED/SPL, or LD/ED/Other). Group three (n = 35) contained parents describing their children as being LD/SPL or LD/Other. Group four (n = 27) consisted of parents of children with Cognitive Disabilities (CD, CD/SPL, or CD/SPL/Other). Group five (n = 15) was composed of parents who had children in the ED program (ED, or ED/SPL). Group six (n = 18) consisted of parents of any child identified as Deaf/Hard of Hearing. Group seven (n = 74) contained parents of children solely identified as LD. Finally, group eight (n = 26) consisted of parents who indicated that their children did not easily fit into the above categories. This eighth group included parents who identified their children as both LD and CD, or a child with all 6 categories checked.

## CHAPTER 4

## Results

All survey questions were analyzed for mean and standard deviation. Results are reported in Table 2. To understand the overall level of satisfaction with the special education services in Eau Claire, parents were asked to respond to the question "How satisfied are you with the overall quality of the special education and related services provided to your child?" Parents were also asked to identify their level of satisfaction with the evaluation of [their] child, the development of [their] child's IEP, and the decision regarding placement for [their] child.

265 parents responded to the question, "How satisfied are you with the overall quality of special education and related services provided to your child?". As reported in Table 3, results indicated that 72.5% of all respondents were either VERY SATISFIED (39.6) or SATISFIED (32.8) with the quality. 8.2% stated that they were DISSATISFIED, and 6.3% were VERY DISSATISFIED. The remaining parents (12.6%) endorsed the option of OK.

Parent's were SATISFIED Or VERY SATISFIED 73.4% of the time with the evaluation of their child. Satisfaction concerning the development of the IEP and placement of the child were similar, 72.6% and 75.7% respectively.

The surveys were also analyzed to determine how satisfied parents were according to their child's disability category. For



the purposes of this study, returned surveys were classified into the aforementioned eight groups, each reflecting different disability categories.

ANOVA results indicated several significant differences in satisfaction across disability type. These results are reported in Table 4. First, significant differences were noted on the question regarding overall satisfaction with the services provided,  $F(7, 257) = 2.89$ ,  $p = .006$ . Using Bonferroni's post hoc analysis, group one (SPL) was found to be significantly more satisfied than groups four (CD, CD/SPL, and CD/SPL/Other) and seven (LD) ( $p = .013$  and  $p = .035$  respectively). The SPL group also displayed elevated levels of satisfaction on two other questions regarding satisfaction. Significant differences were found on questions regarding the development of the IEP  $F(7, 258) = 3.04$ ,  $p = .004$ , as well as the evaluation of the child  $F(7, 259) = 1.26$ ,  $p = .002$ . The SPL group was found to be significantly more satisfied with the development of their child's IEP than the CD group,  $p = .023$ . Further, they were also significantly more satisfied with their child's evaluation than the LD/Other group, the CD group, and the LD group,  $p = .022$ ,  $p = .015$ , and  $p = .012$  respectively.

ANOVA results also indicated that there were differences in satisfaction according to the educational level of the child. There were five categories of student educational levels, early childhood (EC,  $n = 42$ ), elementary school (ELEM,  $n = 114$ ), middle school (MID,  $n = 49$ ), high school (HS,  $n = 56$ ), and multiple

levels (MULT,  $n = 8$ ). As reported in Table 6, differences were noted in parent's overall satisfaction with the quality of services,  $F(4, 260) = 7.79$ ,  $p = .000$ . Using Bonferroni's post hoc analysis, the early childhood group was identified as being significantly more satisfied than both the middle and high school parents,  $p = .039$  and  $p = .000$  respectively. Using post hoc analysis, early childhood parents were also identified as being significantly more satisfied than high school parents with regard to the evaluation of their child ( $p = .023$ ), the development of their child's IEP ( $p = .001$ ), and the decisions regarding the placement of their child ( $p = .009$ ). According to Bonferroni's post hoc analysis, early childhood parent satisfaction with the opportunity for input concerning their child's strengths and education, the amount and type of information received during the IEP meeting, and the amount of information received on their child's progress toward annual goals was also rated significantly higher than high school parents,  $p = .049$ ,  $p = .050$ , and  $p = .003$  respectively. Essentially, every question related to satisfaction was endorsed more positively by early childhood parents compared to high school parents.

ANOVA results, reported in Tables 5 and 7, also determined several significant differences in parental attitudes toward inclusion according to disability type and educational level. Using disability type, one significant difference in parent attitude toward inclusion was found,  $F(7, 253) = 1.36$ ,  $p = .004$ ). For the question, "Do you feel that children with disabilities

should be taught by special education teachers in resource rooms?" the CD group showed significantly higher levels of agreement than the LD/ED or LD/Other groups,  $p = .008$  and  $p = .006$  respectively.

According to educational level, a number of other differences also were found. First, parents of early childhood children displayed significantly stronger agreement to the question "in inclusion, students without disabilities are more likely to learn about differences in the way people grow and develop" than did high school parents,  $p = .019$ . Secondly, parents of elementary children were more likely to agree than high school parents on the following question, "inclusion provides children with disabilities more chances to participate in a variety of activities",  $p = .026$ . Third, high school parents agreed more strongly than middle school parents that "in inclusion settings children with disabilities are socially isolated by general education students",  $p = .006$ . Finally, in response to the question, "Do you feel that children with disabilities should be taught by special education teachers in resource rooms?" both elementary and high school parents showed significantly higher levels of agreement than did middle school parents,  $p = .002$  and  $.024$  respectively.

## CHAPTER 5

## Discussion

The results of this study indicate that parents of special education children in the Eau Claire Area School District are generally satisfied with the services they are receiving. This level of satisfaction was expressed with regard to the evaluation, the placement, and the development of the child's IEP. However, looking specifically at the overall satisfaction levels, several significant differences can be noted between the various groups responding to the survey. These differences are present relative to both the educational level and the disability type of the child.

With regard to disability type, SPL parents (SPL, SPL/Other) were more satisfied than parents of CD children (CD, CD/SPL, CD/SPL/Other) on the quality of services, the evaluation of their child, and the development of their child's IEP. SPL parents also were more satisfied than the parents of LD students concerning the quality of services, and the evaluation of their child. Finally, SPL parents were significantly more satisfied with their child's evaluation than parents of children in group three (LD/SPL, LD/Other).

Significantly higher levels of satisfaction among SPL parents may be explained by looking at the type of disability their child demonstrates. Children receiving Speech/Language services, particularly those who evidence articulation

difficulties, may improve at a rate substantially greater than their special education peers with other disabilities. Parents noting this success may feel increased satisfaction with the quality of services. Children in other disability groups may not evidence as many gains. The parents of LD and CD children were less satisfied in comparison. These students may have a more difficult time making visible progress. Thus, their parents may be less satisfied with the quality of services their child is receiving. Another hypothesis is that this difference in satisfaction is due to the higher percentage of SPL children in the early childhood category (see Table 8). Because differences in satisfaction were also found according to the educational level of the child, perhaps this leads to the elevated satisfaction levels in the SPL sample.

As indicated, according to the educational level of the child, a number of significant difference were found in the level of parent satisfaction. Results show that early childhood parents tended to be more satisfied with the overall quality of services than parents of middle and high school students. For all other satisfaction questions (evaluation, IEP development, placement, IEP input, IEP information given, and annual goal information) early childhood parents were significantly more satisfied than parents of high school students.

This decreasing level of satisfaction as children age may be explained in several ways. First, it is possible that parents of early childhood students may be more optimistic than parents

of older children. Early childhood parents may have only recently become aware of their child's disability. As a result of this, these parents may be more hopeful than parents of older children. Parents of high school children may have had considerable time to understand their child's disability, and may have become disappointed because of the enduring nature of that disability. A second hypothesis is that parents are more satisfied with early childhood programs because they provide parents with something later programs do not.

Other significant findings were related to parent perceptions of inclusionary programs. One finding was that parents of CD children strongly believed that resource rooms were better places to educate students with disabilities.

Again, this belief may be explained as a function of the child's disability. CD children may need more direct assistance than LD or ED students. Thus, parents of CD children might want them in a resource room where they can get more individualized assistance. This finding, however, conflicts with research by Ryndak et al. (1995). This earlier study found that parents of children with more severe disabilities were very positive toward inclusion. In addition, Vaughn and Schumm (1995) state that parents of severely disabled children were more positive toward inclusion than the parents of students with learning disabilities or behavioral disorders. As indicated earlier, placement satisfaction often becomes a function of what skills parents believe to be important. Perhaps parents of CD children in the

Eau Claire Area School District are more interested in academic gains than the parents involved in the Ryndar et al. (1995) study.

### Limitations

Several limitations existed in this study. One limitation involved the way in which the questionnaire was formatted. The survey was designed with a 5-point Likert scale. On this scale, (1) was "very satisfied or strongly agree" and (5) was "very dissatisfied or strongly disagree". While the descriptors were clearly defined at the top of the survey, there appeared to be some confusion as to the meanings of the numbers. For example, one individual responded (5), or "very dissatisfied" related to the quality of services question. However, this same respondent wrote "my child's speech therapist is excellent" immediately next to the item number. Several examples of this apparent confusion were present. It is suggested that future questionnaires should recode the descriptive categories to correspond with the common practice of assigning (1)'s to "very dissatisfied" and (5)'s to "very satisfied." This may alleviate future confusion on the part of the respondents.

Another limitation also was related to the format of the questionnaire. Several parents had more than one child in special education programs. Essentially, there was no means of interpreting the perceptions of parents who had multiple children receiving special education services. If a parent had 3 children

in special education at three different educational levels, there was no way to know what child the respondent was referring to, or determine if any significant differences existed by educational level or disability type. It is possible that one parent's satisfaction with the level or type of special education service differed from child to child.

In the future, additional research looking at how parent satisfaction with special education varies is needed. Little research has been done comparing satisfaction across either disability type or educational level. Understanding why parents of children in the early childhood programs are more satisfied than parents of older students also would be helpful. One might do this by comparing parent satisfaction in families with a single child in the early childhood program to families with multiple children at various educational levels. If there are specific attributes present in the early childhood programs that contribute to the higher levels of satisfaction, those specific program components could be incorporated into the special education programs at other levels.

Another possibility is to compare the perceptions of parents of general education students with those of special education students. This would examine whether parental satisfaction with educational programs tends to diminish as all children get older.



## References

- Berger, E. H. (1991). Parent involvement: Yesterday and today. Elementary School Journal, 91(3), 209-219.
- Crockett, J. B., & Kauffman, J. M. (1998). Taking inclusion back to its roots. Educational Leadership, 56(2), 74-77.
- Dettmer, P. A., Dyck, N. J., & Thurston, L. P. (1996). Consultation, Collaboration, and Teamwork (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon
- Garrick-Duhaney, L. M., & Salend, S. J. (2000). Parental perceptions of inclusive educational placements. Remedial and Special Education, 21(2), 121-128.
- Green, S. K., & Shinn, M. R. (1994). Parent attitudes about special education and reintegration: What is the role of student outcomes? Exceptional Children, 61(3), 269-281.
- Gibb, G. S. & Young, J. R. (1997). A team-based junior high inclusion program. Remedial and Special Education, 18(4), 243-251.
- Lowenbraun, S., Madge, S. & Afflect, J. (1990). Parental satisfaction with integrated class placements of special education and general education students. Remedial and Special Education, 11(4), 37-40.
- National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY). (1997). Parent and student participation in decision making. <http://www.nichcy.org>

Palmer, D. S., Borthwick-Duffy, S. A., & Widaman, K. (1998). Parent perceptions of inclusive practices for their children with significant cognitive disabilities. Exceptional Children, 64(2), 271-282.

Ryndak, D. L., Downing, J. E., Jacqueline, L. R., & Morrison, A. P. (1995). Parents' perceptions after inclusion of their children with moderate or severe disabilities. Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 20(2), 147-157.

Tichenor, M. S., Heins, B., & Piechura-Couture, K. (1998). Putting principles into practice: Parent perceptions of a co-taught inclusive classroom. Education, 120(3), 569-574.

Vaughn, S., & Schumm, J. S. (1995). Responsible inclusion for students with learning disabilities. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 28(5), 264-272.

Table 1

Respondent Demographic Information

<u>Educational Category</u>	<u>n</u>	Percent
Early Childhood (EC)	42	15.6
Elementary School (ELEM)	114	42.4
Middle School (MID)	49	18.2
High School (HS)	56	20.8
Multiple Response (MULT)	08	3.0
Total	269	100.0

<u>Disability Types</u>	<u>n</u>	Percent
#1 (SPL, SPL/Other)	57	21.2
#2 (LD/ED, LD/ED/Other, LD/ED/SPL)	15	5.6
#3 (LD/SPL, LD/Other)	35	13.0
#4 (CD, CD/SPL, CD/SPL/Other)	27	10.0
#5 (ED, ED/SPL)	15	5.6
#6 (D/HOH, D/HOH + any other type)	18	6.7
#7 (LD only)	74	27.5
#8 (Other Groupings: including LD/CD, LD/CD/ED/SPL, among others)	28	10.4
TOTAL	269	100.0

Table 2

Individual Item Analysis

<u>Satisfaction Concerning:</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Quality of Services Provided	2.09	1.20
Evaluation of Child	2.07	1.15
Development of Child's IEP	2.12	1.18
Placement of Child	1.98	1.17
Input Concerning Child's Strengths/Weaknesses	2.00	1.19
Amount and Type of Information during IEP	2.04	1.18
Amount of Information on Child's Annual Goals	2.26	1.21
IF 14+, Transition Options	2.89	1.41

<u>Inclusion Attitude Questions</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Inclusion is more likely to prepare children with Disabilities for real world -----	1.90	1.03
More likely to make children with disabilities feel better about themselves -----	1.97	1.06
Inclusion provides children more chances to participate in A variety of activities -----	1.82	.97
Students without disabilities learn about differences in the way people grow -----	1.99	1.06
Teachers are able to adapt classroom programs to meet the needs of included students -----	2.48	1.15

Table 2 (Continued)

<u>Inclusion Attitude Questions</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Teaching is more effective in a resource room than when it is provided in general education classroom --	2.39	1.13
Inclusion is likely to hurt emotional development of A child with a Disability -----	3.69	1.04
In inclusion, children with disabilities are socially isolated by general education students -----	3.40	1.10
My child should have the same privileges and advantages that other children have in school -----	1.52	.94

Note: 1.0 = Very satisfied/Strongly Agree. 5.0 = Very  
dissatisfied/Strongly Disagree.

Children with disabilities should always be taught in resource rooms -----	2.73	.68
---	------	-----

Note: Always = 1.0, Never = 5.0

Gen. Ed. Teacher has enough time to help your child individually

<u>Response</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Adequate Time	65	24.7
Not Enough Time	146	55.6
Don't Know	52	19.8

Table 3

Satisfaction with the quality of Special Education Services.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Cumulative %</u>
Very Satisfied	105	39.6	39.6
Satisfied	87	32.8	72.5
OK	34	12.8	85.3
Dissatisfied	22	8.3	93.6
Very Dissatisfied	17	6.4	100.0

Table 4

Satisfaction: Overall Quality of Services by Disability Type

<u>Group ID</u>				
<u>(I)2</u>	<u>(J)2</u>	<u>Mean Difference</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>p</u>
(1)SPL	(2)LD/ED	-.77	.34	.658
	(3)LD/SPL	-.72	.25	.117
	(4)CD	-.98*	.28	<b>.013</b>
	(5)ED	-.51	.34	1.000
	(6)D/HOH	-.77	.32	.424
	(7)LD	-.68*	.21	<b>.035</b>
	(8)Other	-.30	.27	1.000

Satisfaction: Evaluation of Child by Disability Type

<u>Group ID</u>		Mean Difference	SE	p
(I)2	(J)2			
(1)SPL	(2)LD/ED	-.74	.33	.662
	(3)LD/SPL	-.83*	.24	<b>.022</b>
	(4)CD	-.92*	.26	<b>.015</b>
	(5)ED	-.47	.33	1.000
	(6)D/HOH	-.81	.30	.230
	(7)LD	-.70*	.20	<b>.012</b>
	(8)Other	-.26	.26	1.000

---

Satisfaction: IEP Development by Disability Type

<u>Group ID</u>		Mean Difference	SE	p
(I)2	(J)2			
(1)SPL	(2)LD/ED	-.88	.33	.235
	(3)LD/SPL	-.68	.25	.191
	(4)CD	-.91*	.27	<b>.023</b>
	(5)ED	-.14	.34	1.000
	(6)D/HOH	-.63	.31	1.000
	(7)LD	-.62	.20	.066
	(8)Other	-.17	.26	1.000

---

Table 5

Inclusion: "Children Learn more effectively in Resource Room" by Disability Type

<u>Group ID</u>		Mean Difference	SE	p
(I)2	(J)2			
(4)CD	(1)SPL	-.39	.16	.415
	(2)LD/ED	-.80*	.22	<b>.008</b>
	(3)LD/SPL	-.65*	.17	<b>.006</b>
	(5)ED	-.66	.22	.065
	(6)D/HOH	-.40	.20	1.000
	(7)LD	-.46	.15	.082
	(8)Other	-.54	.18	.108

Table 6

Satisfaction: Overall Quality of Services by Educational Level

Educational Level		Mean Difference	SE	p
E.C.	Elem.	-.57	.21	.070
	Middle	-.71*	.24	<b>.039</b>
	High	-1.12*	.24	<b>.000</b>
	Multiple	-.40	.45	1.000



Satisfaction: Evaluation of Child by Educational Level

Educational Level		Mean Difference	SE	p
E.C.	Elem.	-.44	.21	.355
	Middle	-.44	.24	.693
	High	-.72*	.23	<b>.023</b>
	Multiple	-.36	.44	1.000

---

Satisfaction: IEP Development by Educational Level

Educational Level		Mean Difference	SE	p
E.C.	Elem.	-.58	.21	.057
	Middle	-.51	.24	.361
	High	-.95*	.23	<b>.001</b>
	Multiple	-.29	.47	1.000

---

Satisfaction: Placement of Child by Educational Level

Educational Level		Mean Difference	SE	p
E.C.	Elem.	-.50	.21	.167
	Middle	-.52	.24	.330
	High	-.79*	.23	<b>.009</b>
	Multiple	-.21	.47	1.000

---

Satisfaction: Opportunity for Input with Educational Level

Educational Level		Mean Difference	SE	p
E.C.	Elem.	-.49	.21	.213
	Middle	-.43	.25	.832
	High	-.68*	.24	<b>.049</b>
	Multiple	7.14E-02	.45	1.000

---

Satisfaction: Information Received by Educational Level

Educational Level		Mean Difference	SE	p
E.C.	Elem.	-.34	.21	1.000
	Middle	-.44	.25	.776
	High	-.68*	.24	<b>.050</b>
	Multiple	-.33	.45	1.000

---

Satisfaction: Annual Goals Information by Educational Level

Educational Level		Mean Difference	SE	p
E.C.	Elem.	-.49	.22	.233
	Middle	-.63	.25	.122
	High	-.90*	.24	<b>.003</b>
	Multiple	.13	.46	1.000

---

Note: Negative mean difference related to increased satisfaction.

Table 7

Inclusion: "Children Learn more effectively in Resource Room" by Educational Level

Educational Level		Mean Difference	SE	p
Middle	E.C.	.22	.14	1.000
	Elem.	.44*	.12	<b>.002</b>
	High	.41*	.13	<b>.024</b>
	Multiple	.29	.26	1.000

Inclusion: "Children with Disabilities are social isolated" by Educational Level

Educational Level		Mean Difference	SE	p
Middle	E.C.	.63	.23	.075
	Elem.	.40	.19	.360
	High	.76*	.22	<b>.006</b>
	Multiple	.99	.44	.239

Inclusion: "More Chances to Participate in Variety of Activities by Educational Level

Educational Level		Mean Difference	SE	p
High	E.C.	.50	.20	.123
	Elem.	.47*	.16	<b>.030</b>
	Middle	.51	.19	.074
	Multiple	.33	.36	1.000

Inclusion: "Other Children Learn About Differences" byEducational Level

<u>Educational Level</u>		<u>Mean Difference</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>p</u>
High	E.C.	.68*	.22	<b>.019</b>
	Elem.	.32	.17	.703
	Middle	.46	.21	.280
	Multiple	.58	.40	1.000

Note: Postive mean difference related to increased disagreement.

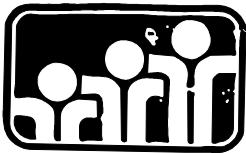
Table 8

SPL Educational Level Analysis.

<u>Educational Level</u>	<u>SPL</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>No SPL</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Early Childhood	39	93	03	07
Elementary School	62	54	52	46
Middle School	13	27	36	73
High School	13	23	43	77
Multiple Response	04	50	04	50

Appendix A

Eau Claire Special Education Survey



## PARENT SURVEY

The purpose of this survey is to learn your views, thoughts and feelings regarding the special education process and inclusion. Filling out **this** survey will take about 10 minutes. **Your response is important to us.** The information you provide will help us improve our services for students with disabilities. Thank you for your time and cooperation! **Please return this survey in the envelope provided by Monday, June 21.**

A. What type of disability/special educational needs does your child have? (Check all that apply)

A. Learning Disability \_\_\_\_\_  
B. Cognitive Disability \_\_\_\_\_  
C. Emotional Disability \_\_\_\_\_

D. Speech and language \_\_\_\_\_  
E. Deaf/Hard of Hearing \_\_\_\_\_  
F. Other \_\_\_\_\_

B. Please indicate the education level of your child:

A- Early Childhood -B. Elementary School

C. Middle School

D. High School

For questions 1-6 on this survey: 1= very satisfied 2= satisfied 3= OK 4= dissatisfied 5= very dissatisfied

1. How satisfied are you with the overall quality of the special education and related services provided to your child:

1 2 3 4 5

2. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with:

a. The evaluation of your child  
1 2 3 4 5

b. The development of your child's IEP  
2 3 4 5

c. The decision regarding placement of your child  
2 3 4 5

3. Are you satisfied with the opportunity for input about your child's strengths and concerns for your child's education?

1 2 3 4 5

4. Are you satisfied with the amount and type of information you received during your IEP team process? 1 2

3 4 5 - 1

5. Are you satisfied with the amount of information you receive on your child's progress toward his/her annual goals? 1 2 3 4 5

6. If your child is 14 or older, how satisfied are you with the amount of information you received from the school about transition options (e.g., job opportunities, education options, and living arrangements)?

1 2 3 4 5 NA

## ATTITUDES ABOUT INCLUSION

Inclusion is the term used to refer to the commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate within the general education environment.

For questions 1-10 on this survey: **1=strongly agree 2=agree 3=undecided 4=disagree 5=strongly disagree**

PLEASE ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS

1. Inclusion is more likely to prepare children with disabilities for the real world, 1  
2 3 4 5

2. Inclusion is more likely to make children with disabilities feel better about themselves. 1 2  
3 4 5

3. Inclusion provides children with disabilities more chances to participate in a variety of activities. 1 2 3  
4 5

4. In inclusion, students without disabilities are more likely to know about differences in the way people grow and develop. 1 2 3 4 5

5. Teachers are able to adapt general classroom programs to meet the needs of students who are included. 1 2 3 4 5

6. Special education teaching is more effective in a resource room than it is when it's provided in the general education classroom. 1 2 3 4 5

7. Inclusion is likely to hurt the emotional development of a child with a disability, 1 2 3 4 5

8. In inclusion settings children with disabilities are socially isolated by general education students. 1 2 3 4 5

9. My child, with a disability, should have the same privileges and advantages that my other children have in school. 1 2 3 4 5

10. Do you feel that general education teachers have time to help your child individually? Adequate time not enough time @ don't know

11. Do you feel that children with disabilities should be taught by special education teachers in resource rooms? Always usually sometimes rarely never -

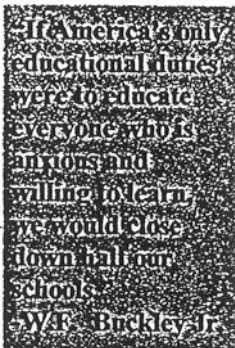
Please make any general comments about special education services in Eau Claire:

THANKS!

Appendix B

Survey Instructions



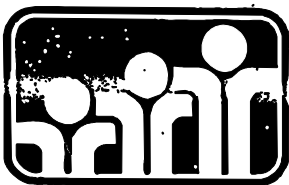


## Parent Survey

In this newsletter you will find that a parent survey has been enclosed. Please take the time to fill out the survey. This survey will be asking questions on the Individual Education Program (IEP) process and inclusion. By answering the questions on the IEP process, you will be providing the district with information that will help in making the IEP process better. The district would like to know how you feel about inclusion. This information will also aid the district in assessing inclusionary practices in our schools.

I encourage all parents to complete this survey. This is a way for you to voice your opinion on certain issues that affect your child. The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete. Mail the survey back in the envelope that has been provided to you. **Please make sure your survey is postmarked no later than Monday, June 21.**

Thank you for your time and cooperation. If you have any questions please call Barb Breen at 833-3473.



Special Education Department  
Eau Claire Area School District  
Soo Wm St. 1  
Eau Claire, WI 54701

NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Permit No. 18  
Eau Claire, WI  
54701

