Barriers That Impede the Progress of CLD Families Entering and Navigating the Special Education System

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Recommended Citation
Zanabria, Julia, "Barriers That Impede the Progress of CLD Families Entering and Navigating the Special Education System" (2019). School of Education Student Capstone Projects. 368. https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hse_cp/368

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BARRIERS THAT IMPEDE THE PROGRESS OF CLD FAMILIES ENTERING AND NAVIGATING THE SPECIAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

By: Julia Zanabria

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

Hamline University
Saint Paul, MN
August, 2019

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Project Summary

There are three main components of my project: a flowchart, a glossary highlighting the most commonly used terms in Special Education, and finally, an explanation of the specific interventions for the most common disabilities identified in my school district. The final project has been compiled into a brochure, to share with CLD families who are entering the Special Education process in the district I work in. The brochure has been created, as a means of addressing my research question: what barriers impede the progress of CLD families entering the Special Education process and what strategies can be used to overcome them?

First, I created a flowchart for CLD families who are beginning the Special Education process in my district. The flowchart is a tool for parents interested in how the U.S. Special Education system works, without the technical jargon and where necessary, terms have been exclusively defined in the glossary. After several years of attending IEP’s and conferences for CLD, and more specifically ELL families being referred to Special Education, I have identified many misconceptions about the entire Special Education process in the United States. I believe a flowchart will be a helpful and supportive visual tool that will clarify these misconceptions.

The flowchart begins when a teacher or caregiver has a concern about a student’s academic growth. The chart will walk through the following processes: pre-referral, evaluation, placement, and continued progress monitoring through the IEP. The language will be basic, in the sense that technical jargon will be avoided. The goal is that this project will decrease barriers, and promote collaboration between Special Education professionals and families of CLD students.
Second, I created a glossary of terms that are commonly used in Special Education. In my experiences participating and observing Special Education meetings, I have heard these terms loosely flow throughout the conversations, but little is done to explain to parents what they actually mean for their child. The list is concise, only focusing on the most common jargon parents are exposed to.

Third, I have highlighted the interventions implemented for the most common disabilities students’ are identified for under Special Education services in my school. These include: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Developmental Delay (DD), and Other Health Disabilities (OHD). In this part of the brochure, examples of supportive services and interventions are explained based on the Special Education diagnosis.

In creating this brochure, my goal is that parents and caregivers will get a better understanding of what they are giving consent to, or declining when they agree or disagree to have their child placed in Special Education. The brochure will be translated into Somali and Spanish, to maintain equitable practices. In conversations I have had with ELL and CLD families, I have identified a common misconception. Parents often believe that their child will be placed with a paraprofessional who will “shadow” their child the entire school day. Parents have expressed concern that this type of intervention will create a stigma around their child, and as a result, the parent declines Special Education. This is problematic because often times the disability may only signify that the student will be pulled out for a small portion of their day with other students to work on areas like social skills. My hope is that this brochure will assist CLD families in making the best decision for their child.
Capstone Project: Copies of English, Somali, and Spanish Parent Brochures
What do I do if my child’s teacher or I have a concern regarding my child's development and/or academic progress?

The Special Education system and process of referring children for Special Education varies around the world. Different countries and cultures have different ways of educating children with special needs. Here, at Saint Louis Park School District, we value an educational environment that is rich with many types of learners. Our community and staff values diversity of language, race, cultural backgrounds, and ability levels. We believe that all students benefit from being in a class with their same-aged classmates for as much of the day as possible. We do our best to provide student’s whom classify under the large umbrella of special needs an integrative learning environment where they are able to be participants in the general education classroom as much of their day as possible.

The Special Education Process can feel overwhelming for any family at first. There is a lot of new information to understand. We want you to know that your child's academic success and development is our primary goal. It is important that you completely understand the process and language that may be used when working with your child's teacher and support team, so that together we can come up with the best plan for your child.

In this brochure, we have created a flowchart of the Special Education process, common terms in the Special Education process, and some examples of Special Education practices for you to have a clear view of the Special Education process in SLP schools. Our goal is to work as a team to make sure your child is receiving a challenging curriculum where he/she can feel successful in school. We want you to ask questions, and offer your expertise—after all, you know your child best!

Please contact Julia Zanabria with Questions:
612-360-4558

Common Terms in the Special Education Process:

IDEA: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the federal law that guarantees individuals the right to be educated in an environment as closely with their peers without disabilities as possible.

Accommodation: An accommodation is a change in teaching techniques, materials or environment. For example, if your child has trouble with writing, she might be allowed to answer test questions orally. Even with that accommodation, though, she’s expected to learn the same content as other kids.

Modification: A modification is a change in what a student is expected to learn and demonstrate. For example, instead of being asked to write an essay analyzing the benefits of protecting our water sources, your child might be asked to describe in writing two facts about where we get our water supply.

IEP: An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is a legal document. If your child qualifies for Special Education, this is a very important document for you and your child. It explains your child's educational goals, academic challenges and strengths. It describes how he/she is currently doing academically. It also lists when and where your child will receive Special Education services.

What does the Special Education Teacher do?

Depending on the disability your child has been diagnosed with, teachers and other staff will help your child in different ways so that your child can be successful in school. Some of these are the ways we do this.

Communication Skills: If a student has trouble communicating verbally, his/her Special Education teacher may create picture cards for the student to use when he/she needs help or has a request. The student would be taught how to use the picture cards to support their learning. For example, if the student needs to use the bathroom but can not express that愿望, he/she would show the teacher a picture card for “bathroom.” These cards would be used in all environments where the student is present.

Social Skills: If a student struggles to act appropriately with his classmates or teachers, the Special Education teacher may practice reciprocal conversations (turn-taking) or creating friendship groups with other students where the student can learn important social skills that will help him/her make friends and be more successful in class.

Behavior Skills: Teachers may use behavior modification if the student is struggling with behavior that is getting in the way of his learning. Behavior modification is rewarding the student (with a sticker, star etc.) when he is showing the desired behavior. The classroom teacher and/or support staff would use this intervention throughout the student’s school day for as long as needed, until the behavior has improved.

Work Completion Skills: If a student has difficulty completing his classwork, Special Education teachers, support staff, and classroom teachers may help the student complete non-preferred activities. Behavior modification (rewarding the desired outcome) may be used for work completion, until the student understands the practice of finishing his work. Teachers may also help students with organizational skills to keep their work organized. For example, teaching the student to use a daily planner with homework assignments, or color-coding folders to help stay organized.

Academic Skills: If a student has difficulty understanding the content that the teacher is teaching, Special Education staff may take the class in a small group setting with less distractions than in the classroom. They may work on skills like letter and number writing, or additional time spent on any academic area they are struggling with.
Shuruudaha Gauud ee Nidaamka Waxbarashada Gaarka ah

IDEA: Shukriyadiisii Nidaamka (IDEA) waa sharciga lehedarinka u dammaan qaadhiyaha shaqaybaadka waxay ku saameeyey in aan ugu dhexdhexay waxay dhiciyo leh hayo. Nidaamka waxbarashada gaarka ah aan ugu shaqeeya.

Deganahaan: Horega wax ahaa loo baahantii yahay ee sheeko ah oo karaa haddii aad u baahan tahay ayaa ka soo burtay in ayaa ku saameeyey in aan ugu dhexdhexay waxay dhiciyo leh hayo. Nidaamka waxbarashada gaarka ah aan ugu shaqeeya.

Dhibuubeyn: Waxaa la xumahay dhibuubeyn kara oo ahaan wax uu guud u fahaydiyo waxay ugu shaqeeyo inaan ugu dhexdhexay waxay dhiciyo leh hayo. Nidaamka waxbarashada gaarka ah aan ugu shaqeeya.
Proceso de la Educación Especial

1. Los padres, el personal escolar u otros solicitan una evaluación de las necesidades especiales. Los padres aceptan que su hijo sea evaluado por escrito.

2. La evaluación se completa y el niño califica.

3. Se desarrolla el Plan de Educación Individual (IEP) y se determina la ubicación de los estudiantes. Ambos son revisados con los padres.

4. Los padres aceptan los servicios.

5. Los padres y el equipo de apoyo de los estudiantes (maestros, maestros de educación especial, etc.) se reúnen anualmente para revisar las metas de los estudiantes.

6. Los padres aceptan las nuevas metas académicas y/o de desarrollo del niño.

El niño se califica, no es elegible para Educación Especial en este momento. El/ella puede ser reevaluado en otro momento.

Los padres no están de acuerdo con los servicios de educación especial.

Ecuelas Publicas de Saint Louis Park

UNA GUIA DE LA EDUCACION ESPECIAL PARA PADRES Y APoderados
¿Qué hago si el maestro de mi hijo o yo tenemos una inquietud con respecto al desarrollo y/o progreso académico de mi hijo?

El sistema de educación especial y el proceso de derivación de niños para educación especial varía en todo el mundo. Diferentes países y culturas tienen diferentes formas de educar a los niños con necesidades especiales. Aquí, en el distrito escolar de Saint Louis París, realizamos un enfoque educativo que incluye una serie de etapas que son una base para nuestra educación especial.

Habíamos entendido que el maestro personal velaba la diversidad de idioma, raza, antecedentes culturales y niñez de facilidad. Enseñamos que todos los estudiantes se beneficiarán estar en un ambiente de aprendizaje interactiva donde pueden participar en el aula de educación general durante la mayor parte del día possible.

El proceso de evaluación especial puede ser abrumador para cualquier familia al principio. Hay mucha información nueva que entender. Queremos que sepas que si tu hijo está en la escuela, el personal está buscando objetivos principales. Es importante que comprendas completamente el proceso y que el maestro se pasearán ideas del mejor plan para su hijo.

En este folleto, hemos incluido un diagrama de flujo del proceso de Educación Especial, con los términos comunes en el proceso de Educación Especial y algunos ejemplos de prácticas de Educación Especial para que tengas una idea clara del proceso de Educación Especial en las escuelas.

Términos comunes en el Educación Especial:

IDEA: La Ley de Educación para Individuos con Discapacidades (IDEA) es la ley federal que garantiza a los estudiantes el derecho a ser educados en un entorno tan cercano como sus compañeros sin discapacidad.

Alejamiento: Un alejamiento es un cambio en la Técnicas de enseñanza, materiales o entorno. Por ejemplo, si tu hijo tiene problemas para escribir, él podría permitirse responder preguntas de la prueba oralmente. Incluye ese alejamiento, sin embargo, se espera que ella aprenda el mismo contenido que otros niños.

Modificación: Una modificación es un cambio en lo que se espera que el estudiante aprenda. Por ejemplo, en lugar de que se le pida que escriba un ensayo, se le pide que escriba una letra. Si tu hijo tiene problemas para escribir, él podría permitirse responder preguntas de la prueba oralmente. Incluye ese alejamiento, sin embargo, se espera que ella aprende el mismo contenido que otros niños.

IEP: un plan de educación individualizado (IEP) es un documento que describe el objetivo académico y fortalece. Describe cómo el(a) él/ella está haciéndose actualmente académicamente. También enumera cuándo y dónde recibirá el su hijo los servicios en español.
Project References

Most of the research for this project was done by talking with my content expert, Laurie Erickson. I wanted to make sure that the information I was going to put in this brochure was relevant to our district. She provided and guided me through the most recent practices for Special Education in the district where we work.
