


5-2004

# Collaboration: Perspectives from Parents and Teachers

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## Recommended Citation

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**Collaboration: Perspectives from Parents and Teachers**

by

**Noelle J. Ciriello**  
**May 2004**

A thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development  
of the State University of New York-College at Brockport in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education

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Unpublished Document

Ciriello, N. (2004). *Collaboration: Perspectives from parents and teachers.*

Unpublished master's thesis, State University of New York College at Brockport.

Collaboration: Perspectives from Parents and Teachers

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## Acknowledgements

The researcher would like to thank Dr. Moira Fallon for her guidance and expertise throughout the process of writing this thesis. The researcher would like to acknowledge Maura Eagle, the principal at Leo Bernabi Elementary School in Spencerport, NY for allowing research to be conducted with the parents and teachers of the school. Thank you to all of the parents and teachers who participated in this study.

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## Abstract

Based on observations of interactions between parents and teachers, the researcher developed the question, what are the perceptions of parents, general education teachers and the special education consultant teacher at a small suburban school, part of a school district in Western New York, on the success or failure of the levels of collaboration? The participants were comprised of parents of fourth and fifth grade students. About twenty-one percent of this population included parents of students with disabilities. Participants also included teachers of fourth or fifth grade. After reviewing the data, the researcher concluded that teachers feel that they possess the skills to include parents in their child's education. The parents would like to communicate with teachers more. They expressed wanting to communicate with teachers monthly and when needed. More parents prefer a written log for communication, including e-mail. Having this knowledge is critical because parents are an important part of the education process.



## Introduction

I am concerned about collaboration between parents and teachers in my internship. In my professional experience, I have noticed a problem with the lack of collaboration between parents and teachers. When collaboration takes place it is usually focused on negative experiences. Parents and teachers are *forced* to come together rather than either group initiating positive collaboration. Collaboration between home and school is important because it is an essential part in providing an effective education for students.

Experts, such as Pruitt, Wandry & Hollums (1998) agree that collaboration between parents and teachers is essential to education, but it is often weak or non-existent. Peterson & Hittie (2003) discuss the importance of home to school collaboration. They demonstrate that if children are going to successfully learn, teachers must include factors from outside the classroom and include the family. Although the U.S Department of Education (Peterson & Hittie, 2003) has tried to strengthen home to school collaboration by providing incentives to schools that develop a plan for partnerships, parents are still apprehensive about collaborating with teachers. Parents may not have had positive experiences in school themselves, or have attempted to collaborate with teachers in the past only to be turned down. It is my opinion that parents feel the only time they have contact with their child's teacher is when they are receiving negative feedback. Parents of minority students or from low-income families have a harder time collaborating with teachers (Thorp, 1997). Parents often feel like the school does not care and the school is unsupportive

regardless of the families background. B.F. Skinner (B.F. Skinner Foundation, 2004) believes in a system of positive reinforcement to receive a behavior that is desired. If a parent is constantly receiving negative reinforcement from the school, they might not collaborate. Skinner also believes attention is a powerful reinforcer. If a parent is not receiving the attention they need from the teacher, this will also interrupt collaboration.

Based on the problems in collaboration that I have seen in my internship, I have developed a research question that I would like to study. I want to study the different levels of collaboration between parents and teachers and their feelings about collaboration. I am interested in studying the collaboration between parents and teachers because I do not feel there is positive collaboration occurring in my internship. The question I have developed is, what are the perceptions of parents of students identified with disabilities, parents of students not identified with disabilities, general education teachers of fourth and fifth grade, and the special education consultant teacher at a small suburban school, part of a school district in western New York, on the success or failure of the levels of collaboration?

## Review of the Literature

There are three issues regarding collaboration that I have found. The information that is known about collaboration between parents and teachers are the view of collaboration from the parent's perspective, the view of collaboration from the teacher's perspective, and strategies to foster collaboration.

### *Collaboration from parental perspectives*

One issue regarding collaboration is the view of collaboration from the parent's perspective. Pruitt, Wandry & Hollums (1998) discuss collaboration from the parent's perspective. Their research stems from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; P.L 101-476), which states, the family must be included in the educational planning of their child. Based on the opinions of the parents of students with special needs, educators have not been successful in including parents in the educational process. The participants of this study were asked about their overall satisfaction with the special education system and how educators could be more sensitive to their needs. Of the seventy-eight families interviewed, only seven families were satisfied with the special education program. The parents expressed their need to have the teachers listen to them, be respectful and sensitive to their needs, learn more about disabilities, and make the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process easier for them to understand. What is not known is if the teachers took the parents' concerns into consideration to improve their collaboration skills. It would be interesting to know if the study had an impact on the partnerships at this school.

Collaboration from the parent's perspective is discussed by Singh (2003). Forty Caucasian mothers were interviewed on the opinions of their child's special education program based on their experiences. The parents were asked several questions about their satisfaction with the collaboration they had with their child's teacher such as, how often they would like to communicate, how they would like to communicate, and how the teachers could make collaboration more successful. Eighty-five percent of the mothers interviewed were satisfied with the services. A majority of the mothers expressed wanting to have daily communication in the form of a written log. As part of this communication the mothers wanted to know how their child was performing academically and socially. The mothers in this study said that the teachers could make collaboration more successful by explaining everything to the parents. What is not known is if the results would have been different if a larger, more diverse population was studied. The fathers and families from different ethnic backgrounds were not included in the study. The inclusion of a more diverse population may have changed the dynamics of the study.

When collaboration is not present between parents and teachers, it is even more important for parents to become advocates for their children with disabilities. Grove & Fisher (1999) interviewed twenty parents of children with severe disabilities who wanted their children educated in the regular classroom. The parents heard about inclusion from conferences for parents of children with disabilities. They did not see inclusion in their local schools, but they wanted their children included because of the benefits they had heard about it. What the parents found was that

educators did not have the background to teach children with disabilities and the parents had to tell the school what would benefit their child. The parents had to fight to get involved in their child's education. The educators seemed supportive, but they did not foster collaboration with the parents. The parents that felt they needed to be included because the school did not know enough about students with disabilities. The parents became the experts on inclusion. What is not known is how much education and training the teachers and staff had received in educating children with disabilities and in collaborating with their parents prior to the study. The implications of the study were also unknown. If teachers received more training would it make a difference in improving the students' education?

#### *Collaboration from teachers' perspectives*

Another major issue regarding collaboration is the view of collaboration from the teacher's perspective. Hewitt (1999) conducts research that conveys the personal perspective of a general education teacher about full inclusion. Many teachers feel unprepared to meet the needs of children with disabilities. Teachers often become burned out because they plan lessons that end up being unsuccessful. In the case of the teacher discussed in this article, she felt she was too busy dealing with behavioral issues to actually teach. In order to deal with the difficulties of inclusive teaching we need to look at inclusive educational practices. It is known that parents should play a role in their child's education because it benefits the child by increasing self-esteem and providing resources for instruction. In order to provide the least restrictive environment that focuses on the individual there needs to be collaboration and

planning between all of the people who interact with the child on a daily basis. If everyone were involved, it would take some of the burden off the general education teacher. What is not known is what has been done to create a partnership between home and school and if this teacher was given support to deal with behavioral issues. The students in this class should have been receiving supports and services.

Mundschenk & Foley (1994) discuss the view of collaboration from the teachers' perspective in secondary schools: Teachers of secondary schools participated in a personal interview to study the perceptions of teachers focusing on the area of partnerships. There was a question as to if home-school partnerships decreased as a student progressed to secondary school. The results compared and contrasted teacher attitudes to parent attitudes. What was found was that teachers and parents had different views on what the school's responsibility was. Teachers believed it was their job to train the students for the workforce. Both teachers and parents agreed that the way to form a partnership was to communicate, but this was not happening. Both groups thought the other group should be responsible for initiating collaboration. What is not known is the kind of collaboration that was occurring in the study's setting prior to the study. There may not have been any collaboration occurring because neither group would initiate it. The reason that the parents and teachers thought it was the other group's responsibility to initiate collaboration is not known.

Collaboration from the teachers' perspective was discussed by Epstein & Dauber (1991) through a school plan that was developed in their article. Data was

collected to begin a three-year plan to improve collaboration between home and school. Studies have determined that there is six different ways the family should be involved in a child's education. One way is the obligations of families. The family should be involved by keeping their child healthy and safe. Another way is the obligations of the school, which include communicating with the family about the child. The third way is involvement at school, which includes parents and others who help out in the school community, for example a parent-helper. Another way is learning activities at home, including suggestions from teachers to parents on how to help their child at home. The fifth way is involvement in decision-making, for example, participation in the parent-teacher association. The last way is collaboration with community organizations such as businesses that provide after-school care. Teachers were asked about the rate of collaboration in these six areas. This information was used to develop and implement the plan.

Teachers' attitudes of collaboration with parents were strong and positive. They felt that it was important to communicate with the parents through parent-teacher conferences, progress reports, and providing resources and information about school programs. The results also showed that teachers felt collaboration was stronger in elementary school. Of the six types of involvement, involvement at school was the area with the most collaboration, while involvement with learning activities was the least. Teachers said that they did not provide learning activities at home because it was hard to organize. What is not known is how the teachers felt after the plan was

implemented and what the specific plan entailed. The plan may have included support in the areas that needed the most improvement.

### *Collaboration Strategies*

Another issue regarding collaboration is the need to develop strategies to foster collaboration. Muscott (2002) opens his article with a quote from Nicolas Hobbs, which describes what must happen in collaboration with parents of children with disabilities. He said, "Parents have to be recognized as special educators, the true experts on their children; and professional people- teachers, pediatricians, psychologists, and others- have to learn to be consultants to parents. (p.66)." I feel that this is true because parents have known their child the longest and have seen every milestone. Parents know the child's temperament, his or her personality, his or her likes and dislikes, and they know how the child will react to certain stimuli. Often parents are not seen as someone who can contribute to the child's education. Educators need to have certain skills in order to collaborate with parents. The findings focus on how to foster collaboration when a family first discovers their child has a disability.

Educators need to be compassionate, and have non-verbal communication skills such as eye contact, and active listening. Educators must recognize that the stages of coping are much like the stages of grief when a loved one has been lost. Parents go through shock and denial, disorganization, and adjustment when dealing with the information that their child has a disability. Teachers need to be receptive of what the family is feeling. What is not known is if parents feel educators have



developed a partnership with them in this way. It may be easier to cope if there are supportive people in the school community.

According to Thorp (1997), to collaborate with parents with cultural differences a teacher must first reflect on their own culture. By understanding one's own culture, we can then begin to understand other cultures and the differences between them. Teachers need opportunities that are not superficial to learn about other cultures. The best way for a teacher to explore another culture is to learn from the family itself. Then the work can begin in the classroom to provide a welcoming environment full of resources and opportunities for involvement. What is not known is how much training teachers currently receive about other cultures especially when the diversity of a school is small. If teachers do not have the opportunity to interact with people from other cultures they may not know how to conduct themselves appropriately when involving parents.

Swick (1992) discusses how to get parents involved in the classroom. The author reviewed research that said parents who have high self-esteem are more active in the child's education. The parents feel secure in the other collaborations they make, such as marriage, so they feel confident in collaboration with their child's teacher. Not all parents feel confident in their collaborations. Teachers should create a classroom that invites the parents to participate. Parents have roles in their family to nurture, teach, and model. These roles can be carried over to the classroom when a parent collaborates with a teacher in decision-making and implementing school activities. The interaction with each family should be unique to the family's needs. There are

many ways to communicate with the family; one such way is by use of technology. Now days it is very easy to access the Internet and send a quick note on how a child's day was via email. What is not known is how teachers feel about having to create this environment without the parent initiating collaboration. They may feel the parent does not want to collaborate because they have not made an effort to make contact with the teacher.

Burnette (1998) discusses the difficulties that minority groups face during collaboration and how to get diverse groups involved in the school. The author provided ways a parent of a minority group can get involved. Collaboration requires work from the teachers and personnel in the school. The school may need to work around the parent's work schedule because the parent cannot take time off work. The school can work with the parent to inform them of what steps will be taken when their child is referred to special education and educate them on their legal rights. The parents need to know if they don't understand or if they disagree with the school, they can ask questions and voice their opinions. This may be something that is different from what they do in their culture so they may not be aware of this.

When communicating with parents, it is important to take into consideration their culture and explain things in a way that they will understand. Translators can be brought in for meetings with parents who speak a language other than English. Also, teachers can send homework with specific instructions and examples so that the parent can work with their child. Along with this, the teacher needs to understand if

the work does not come back completed, due to a misunderstanding. What is not known is how many educators use these recommendations.

I have noticed a problem in my internship between parents and teachers. From observing many teachers during my professional experience, I feel that there is a lack of collaboration between parents and teachers. Parents and teachers only seem to interact when there is a concern from the teacher regarding the student. Other interactions occur because of mandatory parent-teacher conferences. I feel collaboration is important because it helps the student succeed in school. Experts agree that there is a lack of collaboration between parents and teachers.

Researchers who have studied this topic have also seen a lack of collaboration between parents and teachers and have recorded it through documented research. Researchers have interviewed parents and teachers to receive their opinions on the amount of collaboration that is occurring. Most parents are dissatisfied with the efforts from teachers to get them involved in their child's education. Parents wanted more contact from the teacher. Some teachers were satisfied with the amount of collaboration but the practices they use in their classrooms are not known.

Based on what I have seen in my internship, I want to explore collaboration. I want to research the collaboration that is occurring in my internship and how parents and teachers feel about the amount of collaboration they are experiencing. The question that I have developed is, what are the perceptions of parents of students identified with disabilities, parents of students not identified with disabilities, general education teachers of fourth and fifth grade, and the special education consultant

teacher at a small suburban school, part of a school district in Western New York, on the success or failure of the levels of collaboration? I feel that there is a place for research in this area because in order to determine how a school is functioning regarding collaboration, the opinions of the parents and teachers need to be heard. By conducting research on collaboration the outcome may be that one or both groups are not satisfied with the quality of collaboration. Knowing the opinions of the members of the school could promote change.

There are three issues regarding collaboration that I have found and discussed through the findings of other researchers. There is research evidence on the view of collaboration from the parent's perspective, the view of collaboration from the teacher's perspective, and strategies to foster collaboration. The next step is to conduct a study that examines the partnerships between parents and teachers at a small suburban school, part of a school district in Western New York.

## Method

The purpose of this study is to identify and evaluate the perceptions of parents of students identified with disabilities, parents of students not identified with disabilities, general education teachers of the fourth and fifth grade, and the special education consultant teacher at a small suburban school, part of a school district in Western New York, on the success or failure of the levels of collaboration. This research will use a quantitative survey research approach.

### *Subjects*

In this study, group A is composed of participants who are parents of fourth and fifth grade students. The participants live in a suburban area and a large majority commutes to a city center to work. About twenty-one percent of this population includes parents of students with disabilities. The levels of disabilities are mild and include Other Health Impairment, Learning Disability, and Speech and Language Impairment.

In this study, group B is composed of participants who are teachers in a suburban school district. The teachers in this study teach fourth or fifth grade. Sixty-seven percent of the teachers have a general education teaching certification and thirty three percent of the teachers have a special education teaching certification.

### *Instruments*

The survey distributed to the parents is an unpublished instrument developed by the researcher. The first five questions of this survey reflect the levels of collaboration that are currently occurring between parents and teachers according to

the perceptions of parents. Questions six and seven reflect how parents would like to collaborate with teachers. The last question asks parents if they feel they possess adequate skills to collaborate with teachers to make decisions about their child's education. Questions six and seven were adapted for the purposes of this study from Singh (2003). The researcher modified these questions from an interview with parents to fit a rating scale (see Table 1).

The survey distributed to the teachers is an unpublished instrument developed by the researcher. All of the questions of this survey were developed to be similar to the parent survey. The first five questions of this survey reflect the levels of collaboration that are currently occurring between parents and teachers according to the perceptions of teachers. Questions six and seven reflect how teachers would like to collaborate with parents (see Table 2).

The checklist of skills distributed to teachers is an unpublished instrument developed by the researcher. All of the statements on this checklist pertain to teachers' perceptions of their collaboration skills. The teachers are asked to reflect on their skills in the areas of verbal communication, non-verbal communication, environment, and collaboration (see Table 3).

### *Procedures*

The participants for group A were selected for the study using a physical randomized process of a coin flip. Of the 150 families that were potential subjects, 50 families were chosen for the study. Directions to return to the researcher using the addressed stamped envelope accompanied the survey.

Group B was composed of the nine fourth and fifth grade teachers at Leo Bernabi School. The survey and checklist was distributed and accompanied by directions to return to a mailbox in the school's main office.

The researcher will collect the surveys and checklists in one week's time. Analysis includes reviewing the subjects' responses for patterns or trends. Planned statistical analysis includes descriptive statistics using the computer program, Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 12.0. Planned inferential statistics includes a One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

These are the subjects, instruments, and procedures I plan to use in this study. Information and changes to the research design will be reported in the results section of the study.

## Results

The researcher conducted a study to identify and evaluate the perceptions of parents of students identified with disabilities, parents of students not identified with disabilities, general education teachers of the fourth and fifth grade, and the special education consultant teacher at a small suburban school, part of a school district in Western New York, on the success or failure of the levels of collaboration.

The researcher had planned to analyze the results by reviewing the subjects' responses for patterns or trends. Planned statistical analysis included descriptive statistics using the computer program, Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 12.0. Planned inferential statistics included a One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). After reviewing the data, a qualitative analysis was added post hoc. Statistical analysis included descriptive statistics using the computer program, Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 12.0. Post hoc inferential statistics included Paired Samples T-Tests.

### *Qualitative Analysis*

A qualitative analysis was conducted to find patterns and trends in the additional comments provided by the participants (see Table 4).

### *Quantitative Analysis*

*Descriptive statistics.* Descriptive statistics were created using Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 12.0. The results are shown in Table 5 for the parents and Table 6 for the teachers. Descriptive statistics were also created for the teacher checklist using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (see Table 7).



*Inferential statistics.* A Paired Samples T-Test was created to compare results between several of the survey items. The results are shown in Table 8 for the parents and Table 9 for the teachers. A Paired Samples T-Test was created to analyze teachers' responses on the checklist (see Table 10). The planned One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was not computed due to the small sample size. Significant, positive differences were only found for the parents on several items of the survey.

The results will be discussed in the conclusion section.

## Conclusions

The researcher conducted a study that identified and evaluated the perceptions of parents of students identified with disabilities, parents of students not identified with disabilities, general education teachers of the fourth and fifth grade, and the special education consultant teacher at a small suburban school, part of a school district in Western New York, on the success or failure of the levels of collaboration.

Readers should take into consideration the limitations in interpreting the results. First, only parents of fourth and fifth grade students and fourth and fifth grade teachers from one elementary school participated in the study. The results may have been different if parents and teachers of younger students participated because more collaboration between parents and teachers may be needed in younger grades. Second, the participants were included on a volunteer basis. The subjects chose whether or not they wanted to participate so not every subject that was chosen for the study participated. The results of the study may have been different if parents and teachers of students with disabilities were identified. For the purposes of interpreting the data, on the test items that included a choice of a written log, communication through the form of electronic mail (E-mail) was added as a written log.

After reviewing the data, not all statistical analyses were carried out. The researcher planned to analyze the data using descriptive statistics. Planned inferential statistics included a One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 12.0. A qualitative analysis was added post hoc

to find patterns and trends in the additional comments provided by the participants. The research design was changed to a Paired Samples T-Test for inferential statistics using Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 12.0 to compare results between several of the survey items.

The results of this study concurred with the research conducted by Pruitt, Wandry & Hollums (1998), which concluded that educators have not been successful in including parents in the educational process. The difference between the two studies is that more of the parents of this study are satisfied compared to the parents in the Pruitt, Wandry & Hollums study. The results of this study also concurred with the research conducted by Singh (2003), which explored the ways parents would like to communicate with teachers.

Overall, the teachers in this study were satisfied with the levels of communication currently occurring. They feel they possess the skills to include parents in their child's education. Parents of fourth and fifth grade students in this study would like to communicate with teachers more. They expressed wanting to communicate with teachers monthly and when needed. This needs to be interpreted carefully because "when needed" for one student may mean something different for another student. "When needed" could mean a variety of different times depending on the child's needs. The mode of communication that is currently used is usually a written log, including email. A face-to-face meeting is used more often than a phone call. According to these results, a face-to-face meeting is not always a conference between the parent and the teacher that is scheduled. A face-to-face meeting includes

when a parent and teacher exchange any information about the student that occurs when both parties are physically present in the same place. This could occur in the parking lot while the teacher is walking into the building and the parent is bringing their child to school. This could also occur in the hallways in the school. One parent did remark that parent-teacher conferences only occur once during the school year and they would like to see more conferences scheduled throughout the year.

More parents prefer a written log for communication, including e-mail. This could be because it provides flexible communication between the parent and the teacher. The parent and teacher can receive messages and answer messages when it is convenient for them. Teachers need to be careful with this form of technology because one parent did remark that when e-mails are not answered, trust is broken. Parents would also like to communicate with the teacher in the form of a phone call. One parent said, "...I have never had a phone call at home regarding my child's progress. However, giving it some thought, I would LOVE for that to happen. It would only tell me how much the teacher truly cared. Personal phone calls would make for an extra special teacher." The results of this study are important to other professionals because although teachers may be satisfied with the collaboration that is occurring, parents have different needs. A teacher needs to take into consideration how each parent wants to be involved in his or her child's education. Knowing when and how parents want to communicate will improve partnerships between home and school. The next step in the study should be to continue the study by collecting and analyzing data with parents and teachers of students with disabilities identified. The

results should be compared to the results from this study to determine if there is a difference between the perspectives of parents and teachers of students with disabilities and parents and teachers of students not identified with disabilities on the success or failure of collaboration between parents and teachers.

I saw a problem with the collaboration between parents and teachers in my internship. I felt that collaboration was weak or non-existent. By conducting research I have found that although collaboration is weak, it is not as weak as I had originally thought. Collaboration needs to happen more often but it really depends on the needs of the parent. Some parents want to have more communication with the teacher than other parents. Just like students have differences in their abilities and needs, so do parents. Having this knowledge is critical because parents are an important part of the education process.

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Table 1

*Parent Survey*

1. In an average month, how many times do you communicate with your child's teacher?

(Circle one)

0-5                  6-10                  11-15                  16-20                  20+

2. Of these times, how many times do you contact your child's teacher?

0-5    6-10                  11-15                  16-20                  20+

3. Of these times, how many times does the teacher contact you?

0-5    6-10                  11-15                  16-20                  20+

4. What is the current mode of communication that is used to communicate?

(Check all that apply)

- phone call
- written log
- face to face meetings
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

5. Of these interactions, how many are positive? (example: when the teacher calls home to tell about an improvement the child has made)

(Circle one)

0-5                  6-10                  11-15                  16-20                  20+

6. How often would you like to communicate with your child's teacher?

(Circle one)

Daily                  Weekly                  Monthly                  Other \_\_\_\_\_



7. What mode of communication would you prefer when communicating with your child's teacher?

(Check all that apply)

- phone call
- written log
- face to face meetings
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

8. As a parent, do you feel you have the skills to collaborate and make decisions for your child with teachers?

(Circle one)

Sometimes

Always

Never

Additional Comments

Table 2

*Teacher Survey*

1. In an average month, how many times do you communicate with parents?

(Circle one)

0-5                  6-10                  11-15                  16-20                  20+

2. Of these times, how many times do you contact the parent?

0-5    6-10                  11-15                  16-20                  20+

3. Of these times, how many times does the parent contact you?

0-5    6-10                  11-15                  16-20                  20+

4. What is the current mode of communication that is used to communicate?

(Check all that apply)

- phone call
- written log
- face to face meetings
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

5. Of these interactions, how many are positive? (example: when you call home to tell about an improvement the child has made)

(Circle one)

0-5                  6-10                  11-15                  16-20                  20+

6. How often would you like to communicate with parents?

(Circle one)

Daily                  Weekly                  Monthly                  Other \_\_\_\_\_

7. What mode of communication would you prefer when communicating with parents?

(Check all that apply)

- phone call
- written log
- face to face meetings
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments:

Table 3

*Teacher Checklist*

**Verbal Communication**

**Do I...**

Use "I" statements?	Yes	No
Ask open-ended questions?	Yes	No
Summarize/paraphrase discussion?	Yes	No

**Non-verbal Communication**

**Do I...**

Actively listen?	Yes	No
Keep my body language open?	Yes	No
Wait until the other person takes a breath before speaking?	Yes	No
Use eye contact?	Yes	No
Use eye contact while speaking?	Yes	No

**Environment**

**Do I...**

Set up a positive environment?	Yes	No
Set an agenda?	Yes	No

**Collaboration**

**Am I...**

	Never		Sometimes		Always
A team player?	1	2	3	4	5
A consensus seeker?	1	2	3	4	5
A problem resolver?	1	2	3	4	5
Flexible?	1	2	3	4	5
Open-minded?	1	2	3	4	5

**Do I...**

Engage in decision-making?	Yes	No
Build partnerships?	Yes	No
Mediate differences?	Yes	No

**Am I?**

Empathetic?	Yes	No
Compassionate?	Yes	No

Created by Noelle J. Ciriello, 2004

Table 4

*Qualitative Results of Parent Responses*

	Participant	Additional Comment
2	Parent	I always ask for the teacher's advice and what he thinks should be done and take it from there.
5	Parent	My son is very lucky to have such as wonderful teacher! Communication is wonderful!
8	Parent	Collaboration requires trust-trust is not built or/and is destroyed when emails are not answered, when there is not follow through, when there are lies by staff, when school/staff have there own agenda. Reluctance to contact teachers because child feels they are then punished.
11	Parent	Parent teacher conferences are only once per year unless others are requested. I have a child who received AIS services. I would like to see more conferences schedules maybe twice per year.
14	Parent	I am very happy with my daughter's teacher, as is my daughter.
15	Parent	I am blessed enough to have a child who excels in school. Therefore, a lot of communication is not needed. However, there have been times when I've had questions or concerns. In that case, I usually write a letter. The face-to-face meetings only happen when a parent-teacher conference is scheduled. Also, I have never had a phone call at home regarding my child's progress. However, giving it some thought, I would LOVE for that to happen. It would only tell me how much the teacher truly cared. Personal phone calls would make for an extra special teacher.
21	Parent	The only communication initiated by the teacher is the report card sent home. It would be nice to have regular communication. I have periodically inquired as to my son's progress in school and concerns expressed by the teacher, but the teacher has not initiated any communication. I don't feel there is any collaboration between the teacher and me.

Table 5

*Descriptive Statistics for Parent Survey Results*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
In an average month, how many times do you communicate with teachers?	23	1	1	1.00	.000
Of these times, how many times do you initiate contact?	23	1	1	1.00	.000
Of these times, how many times does the other party contact you?	23	1	1	1.00	.000
Parent A phone call is used for communication	23	1	2	1.70	.470
Parent A written log is used for communication	23	1	2	1.13	.344
Parent A face to face meeting is used for communication	23	1	2	1.61	.499
Of these interactions, how many are positive?	21	1	1	1.00	.000
How often would you like to communicate?	23	1	4	3.09	.793
I prefer a phone call for communication	23	1	2	1.57	.507
I prefer a written log for communication	23	1	2	1.22	.422
I prefer a face to face meeting for communication	23	1	2	1.65	.487
As a parent, do you feel you have the skills to collaborate and make decisions for your child with teachers?	23	1	3	1.91	.668
Valid N (listwise)	21				

Table 6

*Descriptive Statistics for Teacher Survey Results*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
In an average month, how many times do you communicate with parents?	6	1	3	1.83	.753
Of these times, how many times do you initiate contact?	6	1	3	1.50	.837
Of these times, how many times does the other party contact you?	6	1	1	1.00	.000
Teacher A phone call is used for communication	6	1	1	1.00	.000
Teacher A written log is used communication	6	1	2	1.33	.516
Teacher A face to face meeting is used for communication	6	1	2	1.50	.548
Of these interactions, how many are positive?	6	1	1	1.00	.000
How often would you like to communicate?	6	1	4	2.33	1.033
I prefer a phone call for communication	5	1	2	1.20	.447
I prefer a written log for communication	5	1	2	1.20	.447
I prefer a face to face meeting for communication	5	1	2	1.80	.447
Valid N (listwise)	5				

Table 7

*Descriptive Statistics for Teacher Checklist Results*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Do I use "I" Statements?	6	1	2	1.17	.408
Do I ask open-ended questions?	6	1	1	1.00	.000
Do I summarize/paraphrase discussion?	6	1	2	1.33	.516
Do I actively listen?	6	1	1	1.00	.000
Do I keep my body language open?	6	1	1	1.00	.000
Do I wait until the other person takes a breath before speaking?	6	1	2	1.33	.516
Do I use eye contact?	6	1	1	1.00	.000
Do I use eye contact while speaking?	6	1	1	1.00	.000
Do I set up a positive environment?	6	1	1	1.00	.000
Do I set an agenda?	6	1	2	1.50	.548
Am I a team player?	6	4	5	4.33	.516
Am I a consensus seeker?	6	4	5	4.17	.408
Am I a problem resolver?	6	4	5	4.33	.516
Am I flexible?	6	3	5	4.33	.816
Am I open-minded?	6	3	5	3.83	.753
Do I engage in decision-making?	6	1	1	1.00	.000
Do I build partnerships?	6	1	1	1.00	.000
Do I mediate differences?	6	1	1	1.00	.000
Am I empathetic?	6	1	1	1.00	.000
Am I compassionate?	6	1	1	1.00	.000
Valid N (listwise)	6				



Table 8

*Inferential Statistics for Parent Survey Results*

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	In an average month, how many times do you communicate with teachers? - Parent A phone call is used for communication	-.696	.470	.098	-.899	-.492	-7.091	22	.000*
Pair 2	In an average month, how many times do you communicate with teachers? - Parent A written log is used for communication	-.130	.344	.072	-.279	.018	-1.817	22	.083
Pair 3	In an average month, how many times do you communicate with teachers? - Parent A face to face meeting is used for communication	-.609	.499	.104	-.824	-.393	-5.850	22	.000*
Pair 6	In an average month, how many times do you communicate with teachers? - How often would you like to communicate?	-2.087	.793	.165	-2.430	-1.744	-12.625	22	.000*
Pair 7	In an average month, how many times do you communicate with teachers? - I prefer a phone call for communication	-.565	.507	.106	-.784	-.346	-5.348	22	.000*
Pair 8	In an average month, how many times do you communicate with teachers? - I prefer a written log for communication	-.217	.422	.088	-.400	-.035	-2.472	22	.022

Pair 9	In an average month, how many times do you communicate with teachers? - I prefer a face to face meeting for communication	-652	.487	.102	-.863	-.442	-6.423	22	.000*
Pair 10	How often would you like to communicate? - I prefer a phone call for communication	1.522	.846	.176	1.156	1.888	8.628	22	.000*
Pair 11	How often would you like to communicate? - I prefer a written log for communication	1.870	.968	.202	1.451	2.288	9.264	22	.000*
Pair 12	How often would you like to communicate? - I prefer a face to face meeting for communication	1.435	.992	.207	1.006	1.864	6.936	22	.000*

\* Adjusted p value of .004 or less was used to calculate significance levels.

Table 9

*Inferential Statistics for Teacher Survey Results*

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	In an average month, how many times do you communicate with parents? - Teacher A phone call is used for communication	.833	.753	.307	.043	1.623	2.712	5	.042
Pair 2	In an average month, how many times do you communicate with parents? - Teacher A written log is used for communication	.500	1.049	.428	-.601	1.601	1.168	5	.296
Pair 3	In an average month, how many times do you communicate with parents? - Teacher A face to face meeting is used for communication	.333	1.033	.422	-.751	1.417	.791	5	.465
Pair 4	Of those times, how many times do you initiate contact? - Of these times, how many times does the other party contact you?	.500	.837	.342	-.378	1.378	1.464	5	.203
Pair 5	In an average month, how many times do you	.833	.753	.307	.043	1.623	2.712	5	.042

Pair 6	communicate with parents? - Of these interactions, how many are positive? In an average month, how many times do you communicate with parents? - How often would you like to communicate?	-.500	1.517	.619	-2.092	1.092	-.808	5	.456
Pair 7	In an average month, how many times do you communicate with parents? - I prefer a phone call for communication	.600	.894	.400	-.511	1.711	1.500	4	.208
Pair 8	In an average month, how many times do you communicate with parents? - I prefer a written log for communication	.600	1.140	.510	-.816	2.016	1.177	4	.305
Pair 9	In an average month, how many times do you communicate with parents? - I prefer a face to face meeting for communication	.000	1.225	.548	-1.521	1.521	.000	4	1.000
Pair 10	How often would you like to communicate? - I prefer a phone call for communication	.800	.837	.374	-.239	1.839	2.138	4	.099
Pair 11	How often would you like to communicate? - I prefer a written log for communication	.800	.447	.200	.245	1.355	4.000	4	.016

Pair 12	How often would you like to communicate? - I prefer a face to face meeting for communication	.200	.447	.200	-.355	.755	1.000	4	.374
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Table 10

*Inferential Statistics for Teacher Checklist Results*

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Do I use "I" statements? - Do I ask open-ended questions?	.167	.408	.167	-.262	.595	1.000	5	.363
Pair 2	Do I use "I" statements? - Do I summarize/paraphrase discussion?	-.167	.408	.167	-.595	.262	-1.000	5	.363
Pair 3	Do I ask open-ended questions? - Do I summarize/paraphrase discussion?	-.333	.516	.211	-.875	.209	-1.581	5	.175
Pair 5	Do I actively listen? - Do I wait until the other person takes a breath before speaking?	-.333	.516	.211	-.875	.209	-1.581	5	.175
Pair 8	Do I keep my body language open? - Do I wait until the other person takes a	-.333	.516	.211	-.875	.209	-1.581	5	.175

	breath before speaking?								
Pair 11	Do I wait until the other person takes a breath before speaking? - Do I use eye contact?	.333	.516	.211	-.209	.875	1.581	5	.175
Pair 12	Do I wait until the other person takes a breath before speaking? - Do I use eye contact while speaking?	.333	.516	.211	-.209	.875	1.581	5	.175
Pair 14	Do I set up a positive environment? - Do I set an agenda?	-.667	.516	.211	-1.209	-.125	-3.162	5	.025
Pair 15	Am I a team player? - Am I a consensus seeker?	.167	.753	.307	-.623	.957	.542	5	.611
Pair 16	Am I a team player? - Am I a problem resolver?	.000	.632	.258	-.664	.664	.000	5	1.000
Pair 17	Am I a team player? - Am I flexible?	.000	.894	.365	-.939	.939	.000	5	1.000
Pair 18	Am I a team player? - Am I open-minded?	.500	.837	.342	-.378	1.378	1.464	5	.203
Pair 19	Am I a consensus seeker? - Am I a	-.167	.753	.307	-.957	.623	-.542	5	.611

	Am I a problem resolver?								
Pair 20	Am I a consensus seeker? - Am I flexible?	-.167	.753	.307	-.957	.623	-.542	5	.611
Pair 21	Am I a consensus seeker? - Am I open-minded?	.333	.816	.333	-.524	1.190	1.000	5	.363
Pair 22	Am I a problem resolver? - Am I flexible?	.000	1.095	.447	-1.150	1.150	.000	5	1.000
Pair 23	Am I a problem resolver? - Am I open-minded?	.500	1.049	.428	-.601	1.601	1.168	5	.296
Pair 24	Am I flexible? - Am I open-minded?	.500	.548	.224	-.075	1.075	2.236	5	.076



The author Noelle Julia Ciriello was born in Douglaston, New York on

. She attended the State University of New York College at Brockport from 1998 to 2002 and received a Bachelor of Science in English and an Elementary Education Teacher Certification in 2002. She began working toward a Master of Science in Childhood Special Education at the State University of New York College at Brockport in the summer of 2003.

## **RELATED EXPERIENCES**

### **Intern Special Education Teacher**

Leo Bernabi Elementary School Spencerport, New York September 2003-Present  
Designed, implemented, and evaluated individualized education programs for fourth and fifth grade students as a special education consultant teacher. Participated in parent-teacher conferences and Committee on Special Education meetings. Collaborated with the general education teacher to modify lesson plans.

### **Camp Counselor**

Camp Abilities Brockport, New York June 2002

Participated in a one-week sports camp for children ages 9 to 21 with severe disabilities. Specific experience includes working with an older child with a visual impairment and developmental disability. Conducted a comprehensive assessment record on child's accomplishments.

### **Substitute Teacher**

Greece Central School District Greece, New York January 2003-June 2003

Performed the daily responsibilities of the regular teacher and special education teacher in their absence.

### **Student Teacher**

Pine Brook Elementary School Greece, New York October 2002-December 2002

Taught in a fourth grade inclusion classroom. Designed and implemented a math unit on arrays and shares from the Investigations program. Planned and acted as the classroom teacher for one full week. Assisted in parent-teacher conferences.

### **Student Teacher**

Longridge Elementary School Greece, New York September 2002-October 2002

Taught in a second grade classroom. Designed and implemented a social studies unit on communities. Organized a field trip to Tops Friendly Market. Planned and acted as the classroom teacher for one full week. Assisted at open house.

### **Tutor, Grades 6, 7 and 8**

Frederick Douglass Middle School Rochester, New York January 2002

Assisted classroom teacher by providing help to middle school students during class time. Worked with small groups of students and individually to support instructional objectives.