To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Sarah Kathryn Hauser entitled "A Survey of Knowledge, Communication, and Attitudes Between Parents and Teachers Concerning Parental Legal Rights." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Special Education.

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The Graduate School

A SURVEY OF KNOWLEDGE, COMMUNICATION, AND ATTITUDES BETWEEN PARENTS AND TEACHERS CONCERNING PARENTAL LEGAL RIGHTS

A Thesis

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Degree

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the differences in knowledge, communication, and attitudes between parents and teachers of elementary and secondary handicapped students concerning parental rights as mandated by P.L. 94-142. To accomplish this investigation, a questionnaire was devised to elicit responses in the areas of knowledge, communication, and attitudes concerning the law. Questionnaires were sent to 669 parents and 142 responded. Fifteen of 36 special education teachers responded.

Data was analyzed using t-tests, chi square tests, frequency data, and frequency response percentages. Analysis of the data revealed significant differences between parents and teachers concerning knowledge of the law, perceptions of how parents are informed of the law, and perceptions of the effectiveness of the communication process.

The major findings show that teachers have significantly more knowledge of the law than parents, although many parents were familiar with certain specifics of P.L. 94-142. A significant difference was also found in the perceptions parents and teachers have of how parents are informed. Teachers perceived communication existing in ways to which parents minimally responded. The third major finding was a difference in the perceptions of parents and teachers concerning the effectiveness of the communication process. Parents perceived themselves as being much more aware of legal issues and participation in their child's education than the teachers perceived them.

The overall communication process between parents and teachers concerning parental legal rights was perceived differently by parents and teachers. Although parents perceived communication to be adequate, the study revealed their knowledge to be significantly less than that of the teachers.

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CHAPTER I

PRESENTATION OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Records from earlier centuries have indicated that handicapped children have been abandoned, subjected to public ridicule and harassment, imprisoned, and otherwise mistreated. Even within this century, the handicapped have been denied the rights of citizenship in this country. They have been excluded from the public school program on the basis of their handicap. Today, there are state and federal laws governing the educational rights of handicapped children. The rights and privileges to a free and appropriate public education for all handicapped children, chronologically aged 3-21, were established by Tennessee state law in 1972 and by federal law in 1975. The children, though, are dependent upon their parents and educators to implement the legal procedures which make their education possible. The parents, ideally, should be the childrens' primary advocate, but are they? Are parents of handicapped children aware that their children are entitled to a free, appropriate public education? Are they sufficiently familiar with the laws that protect the educational rights of their children?

According to research, there is reason to believe that families with handicapped children are not aware of their legal rights. However, for the law to be effective, parents with handicapped

children must be informed of their rights, privileges, and responsibilities. Parents must also be sufficiently aware of what it takes to provide appropriate educational services to the handicapped so as to actively and meaningfully participate in the decision-making process.

Statement of the Problem

This study examines knowledge, communication, and attitudes between parents and teachers of elementary and secondary handicapped students concerning a specific set of state and federal mandated parental rights and policy statements provided by these laws.

Both parents and teachers were given ample opportunity to react objectively to a 19-item questionnaire. The items dealt with knowledge of, communication of, and attitudes toward P.L. 94-142. Opportunity was given on the questionnaire form for both the parents and the teachers to provide any additional comments regarding parent/teacher communication about the law.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze the communication between special education teachers of elementary and secondary levels and parents of elementary and secondary school age children specific to parental rights under the state and federal laws. Specifically, the following research questions were investigated:

1. Do parents and teachers differ in their knowledge of P.L. 94-142?

2. Do the views of parents and teachers differ concerning the communication of the legal provisions of this law?
   a) Are the parents informed by the teachers?
   b) How are parents informed?
   c) How effective is the communication between parents and teachers?

Presumably, the special education teacher has sufficient understanding of the state and federal mandates. They can communicate to parents the rights and other service guidelines for parents. They should also communicate procedures required the state policies concerning P.L. 94-142.

The potential is increased for establishing a positive and supportive working relationship if the teacher is able to properly advise the parent and keep the parent informed of service alternatives and procedures. This should enhance the possibility of maximizing services delivered to the handicapped student.

Definition of Terms

1. Communication—act of communicating; a verbal or written message; interchange of thoughts (Webster New Collegiate Dictionary, 1956).
2. Comprehensive Development Class—a self-contained special education class within the public school which provides at least 6 hours of special education per day. These children are able to be mainstreamed in most activities outside of academics.

3. Due Process—legal process by which parents or guardians can complain of any matter relating to the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of their child (Codification of Public Law 94-142, 1975).
4. Exceptional Children—a) children of school age and under 21 years of age of educable mind, whose bodily functions or members are so impaired that they cannot safely or adequately be educated in the regular classes of the public schools without special educational services, and to include b) children of school age and under 21 years of age who are psychologically exceptional, and to include children of pre-school age down to and including the age of 3 years, who are deaf (Tennessee Code Annotated, Ch. 29).
5. Handicapped Children—see part (a) of definition 4. For purposes of this study, handicapped children includes only part (a) of the exceptional children definition and includes only those children enrolled in either a resource or comprehensive development class. The handicaps of these children are mental retardation, learning disabled, or emotionally disturbed.
6. Individual Education Program (IEP)—a written statement for a handicapped child that is developed and implemented in accordance with the following:
   a) Must be in effect before special education and related services are provided to a child;

b) Must be implemented as soon as possible following the necessary meetings;

c) Must include: 1) a statement of the child's present levels of educational performance; 2) statement of annual goals and short term instructional objectives; 3) statement of specific education and related services to be provided to the child, and the extent to which the child will be able to participate in regular educational programs; 4) the projected dates for initiation of services and the anticipated duration of the services; and 5) appropriate objective criteria and evaluation procedures and schedules for determining whether the objectives are being achieved (Codification of P.L. 94-142, 1975).

7. Least Restrictive Environment—to the maximum extent possible, handicapped children, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not handicapped, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of handicapped children from the regular environment occurs only when the nature or the severity of the handicap is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (Codification of P.L. 94-142, 1975).

8. M-team—the group of persons responsible for educational planning for the identified handicapped child; includes a minimum of three professional personnel in addition to the parents of the student and the student when appropriate (Manual for Implementing a Student Evaluation Program—Department of Education, State of Tennessee).
9. Parents—a parent, guardian, or person acting as a parent of a child, or a surrogate parent who has been appointed (Codification of P.L. 94-142, 1975).
10. Public Law 94-142—amendments to the Education of the Handicapped Act which include all regulations governing handicapped children's education (Codification of P.L. 94-142, 1975).
11. Special Education—specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents or guardians, to meet the unique needs of a handicapped child, including classroom instruction, instruction in physical education, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions (Codification of P.L. 94-142, 1975).
12. Special Education Teacher—a professional trained to supply the handicapped children's needs as given in number 10 above.

Limitations

The study will be limited to those individuals in schools pre-selected by the system's supervisory personnel. The investigator's

school was not used in order to prevent data contamination. Therefore, there is limited generalizability to similar school systems.

Need for the Study

In reference to P.L. 94-142, there has been little research conducted concerning the knowledge and attitudes parents have of handicapped children. Additionally, research is minimal on parent/teacher communication regarding the legal rights of parents. To determine if these issues are of concern in the population of Anderson County, Tennessee, this specific study was designed. The ultimate goal supported by this study is to provide the best possible education for the handicapped students within the public school environment. To meet this goal, parents must know their children's legal rights, their own legal rights, and must have positive and informative communication with the special education teachers. Zindel (1979) instructs the parents involved in the UCLA special children's program to be troublemakers and to demand the best for their children. The parents themselves must become child advocates to fight for their children.

The above observation may not be a conducive attitude for inproving parent/teacher communication, but it certainly pinpoints the reason for improving the communication to ultimately provide an appropriate education for the handicapped children as specified by both state and federal laws. One primary need is to inform the parents of the law. Even though the school districts are responsible

for familiarizing parents with the law, many parents do not know the law or their states' adaptation of it (Thompson, 1980-81).

P.L. 94-142 has built-in protective guidelines such as regulations and clauses to assure the child's best interest by both the parents and the schools. Only positive communication will reduce any disagreements between the schools and parents with sharing of concern for the children. Too often, though, the schools state that they want to provide communication through working relationships with parents, but there is no follow-through (Abeson, 1980-81). To increase this communication is crucial, for it is one of the most important factors toward increasing parental knowledge of P.L. 94-142. This, in turn, shall lead to providing more appropriate services to the children.

There has been much discussion on how best to implement P.L. 94-142. Much time has been spend in developing the most efficient processes to fulfill this law. These processes have been developed, explained, and implemented. With so much time being spent on processes, it seems that the product has been neglected. The product is the education of the handicapped children—our ultimate goal (Harmon, 1979). Since the communication of legal rights to parents is part of this implementation process, much care must be taken to keep straight the priorities of the parent/teacher communication procedure, which should be to best serve the handicapped children.

Another aspect concerning the need for this study is reflected in a survey conducted by Carpenter and Robson (1979). A statewide survey of Indiana was conducted to collect data on expectations and

knowledge of P.L. 94-142. The population consisted of special education teachers, parents of handicapped children, and special education directors. This study was conducted soon after the implementation of P.L. 94-142 in 1978. Results from this questionnaire showed that a majority of the special education teachers felt they had no or limited knowledge of the law. Concerning provisions such as due process, compliance dates, and least restrictive environment, 45 percent had no or little knowledge. Of the parent population, 75 percent had little or no knowledge of the law's key provisions. In the areas of case conference procedures and individual education programs which, by law, directly involved the parents, 46.2 percent of the parents reported no knowledge. Also, Carpenter and Robson (1979) found that parents, overall, believed that the law would make positive changes.

A last and most important need which may be met is that of keeping the educational decisions with the educators and not with the courts. The better and more effective the parent/teacher communication, the less need there will be for due process hearings and court actions. The more the cases are taken to court, the more the federal government infiltrates the educational system, thus taking away local and state power to determine appropriate education (Behrmann, Behrmann, and Goltz, 1979).

As the studies indicate, knowledge of legal implications of P.L. 94-142 is of utmost importance in providing quality educational services to handicapped children in public schools. To inform parents of these laws, the special educators themselves must be

familiar with the laws and be able to communicate this legal knowledge to the parents in such a way that increased understanding results.

Research Questions

The following questions focus on the need to implement more effective communication and improve knowledge of P.L. 94-142 between parents and special education teachers.

1. Do parents and teachers differ in their knowledge of P.L. 94-142?
2. Do the views of parents and teachers differ concerning the communication of legal provisions?
   a) Are the parents informed by the teachers?
   b) How are parents informed?
   c) How effective is the communication between teachers and parents?

Hypotheses to be Tested

Hypothesis 1: There is no difference in the mean knowledge score for parents and for teachers of provisions of P.L. 94-142.

Hypothesis 2: There is no difference in the perceptions of parents and teachers about whether parents are informed of the legal provisions of P.L. 94-142.

Hypothesis 3: There is no difference in parent and teacher perceptions of how parents are informed concerning P.L. 94-142.

Hypothesis 4: There is no difference in the perceptions of parents and teachers of the effectiveness of the communication process between parents and teachers concerning P.L. 94-142.

A need has been established for further study in this specific area as the research is limited concerning these issues. Chapter II reveals more specific research conducted in the areas of: Historical Findings, Present Legal Implications and Findings, Parents' Knowledge and Attitudes, Educators' Knowledge and Attitudes, and Methods to Improve Parent/Teacher Communication.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The amount of research literature available concerning P.L. 94-142 is vast, but very little literature is available concerning either parent/teacher knowledge of the law or parent/teacher communication about the law. Therefore, Chapter II is divided into five sections of related literature.

Section I deals with the background and development of educational legal procedures which ultimately led to the legislation of P.L. 94-142.

Section II deals with the present legal implications concerning parent/teacher knowledge and involvement.

Section III is concerned with parents' knowledge and attitudes toward the law as well as toward educators and the schools.

Section IV deals with the educators' knowledge and attitudes toward the law and toward parents and parental involvement within the school environment.

Section V reviews several studies of parent/teacher communication and methods to improve its effectiveness.

Procedures used to review the literature included use of the ERIC files, periodical literature, and card catalogue search for appropriate information.

Historical Research

In 1954, the Brown vs. Topeka, Kansas Board of Education case contested the constitutionality of black students to attend public school. In regard to this issue, the court stated that:

> Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society. . . . In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.

This statement is fundamental to all education and certainly includes handicapped children's education. However, it took 16 years for legal application to apply the equal education concept to handicapped children (Zettel and Ballard, 1979). Since the law is now established, it is necessary for parents and teachers to adequately understand its mandates and communicate positively with each other concerning these legal issues to give optimal educational opportunities for handicapped children.

The case of the Pennsylvania Association of Retarded Children vs. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania established that a due process hearing was required before a denial of public education to retarded children (Ware and Massie, 1979). A third relevant case was that of Mills vs. District of Columbia Board of Education (1972), which established that all handicapped children were to be granted an equal opportunity for public education (Ware and Massie, 1979; Zettel and Ballard, 1979). After these crucial court decisions,

the following were found: In the 2-1/2 years following the Pennsylvania Association of Retarded Children and the Mills cases, 46 similar cases were brought to the courts (Zettel and Ballard, 1979). In the last 25 years, more court cases concerning similar educational needs were conducted than in the previous 175 years. Between the years 1948 and 1966, there was a 500 percent increase in the number of enrolled handicapped students in the school-age population (Ware and Massie, 1979). Much of this is thought by the researcher to be due to parental awareness and the action of litigation.

Prior to the passage of P.L. 94-142, there were 8 million handicapped children aged 3-21 years in the United States. At least half of these children were not receiving full educational opportunity, and an estimated 1 million children were totally excluded from public education (Schipper, 1979). Unfortunately, even in the mid-1970's, there were still exclusions of handicapped children and inadequate provisions for their education (Zettel and Ballard, 1979).

It is made evident by this historical research that as parents' legal knowledge and understanding grew, however slightly, the handicapped children began receiving more special education. With increased knowledge and understanding of legal rights and procedures, the quality of handicapped education appears to have grown as well.

Present Legal Implications and Findings

Often in the past, parents have had to assert themselves either militantly and/or legally to obtain the right to participate

in the decision making process regarding their children's education. After they achieved the goal of securing expanded services for their children, they began challenging those same services which they helped to create. This is an obvious warning that something is wrong concerning the communication of parental legal rights between parents and educators (Clements and Alexander, 1975). Jones (1979) gives further explanation, saying that the parents were frustrated because they had diligently worked to get the laws passed and then few implementation steps were taken.

The procedure of due process, as mandated by P.L. 94-142, is an essential legal protection for the children, the parents, and the local education association. These hearings can provide satisfactory outcomes and can be initiated by either the parents or the school (Abeson, 1980-81). There are many requirements which accompany the due process procedure, one important one being explanation of these procedures to the parents (Harmon, 1979). Even though some parents have sought action through legal means, according to Helge (1980), many other parents often do not know of their rights concerning their children's education. However, this seems to be more evident in smaller communities in which there was frequent disregard for the mandates concerning establishing and increasing parental involvement.

Once the law and procedures are explained to the parents, they are better able to monitor public school compliances. Simonson (1980-81) calls P.L. 94-142 "a virtual Educational Bill of Rights for Parents" for it gives them the right to question any procedures used to evaluate their children. This includes the questioning of

psychological and educational testing, identification techniques, and educational placement. If these procedures do not adequately satisfy the parents, a due process hearing may ensue. For this explanation to be worthwhile, and in order to satisfactorily implement the law, the teachers must be able to interpret its mandates (Bailey and Darton, 1979). The law states that schools must include parents in their children's educational planning, not merely invite them to participate (Turnbull, 1981).

The provisions provided by P.L. 94-142 have essentially enabled parents to participate as cooperating partners with the school. The primary area of parental involvement surrounds the Individual Education Program (IEP), which provides the basic guidelines for each individual child's special education. In order for the parents to adequately serve as the school's partner, they need guidelines for interpreting and formulating the IEP's. Parental involvement remains minimal if they have no understanding of the educational processes. It is now the parents' responsibility, as well as the schools', to make sure the decisions made concerning the IEP's are accurate and relevant. Parents either need to learn all of the technical educational jargon or demand that it all be explained. Having only limited knowledge may lead to unnecessary misinterpretations (Thebodean and Kennedy, 1981). Ideally, public school personnel should assume the responsibility of carefully communicating all educational alternatives and instructional programs offered the handicapped child.

Even though the law encourages active IEP involvement by the parents, it cannot assure participation. If parents will not participate, the schools must represent the children (Abeson, 1980-81).

The law can and does mandate parental involvement, but the positive attitudes necessary for successful parent/educator communication is beyond legal control. There are crucial relationship needs between the parents and teachers inherent to the law fulfillment. The building of these relationships is a challenge to educators, who become the link between the school and the parents (Carey, 1981).

> Only when teachers take time to make parents an integral part of their commitment to the education of the handicapped child will the true intent of this law be known. We have all the laws and rights we need. We now need to make them workable, human and <u>real</u>! (Carey, 1981)

These studies of present legal issues in handicapped children's education pose some serious problems concerning both the parents and the educators. It seems that parents either become militant and demanding by limited knowledge or misunderstanding of the law or they become frustrated due to lack of knowledge and understanding. Primarily, research reveals that parents are not as familiar with the law as they should be to adequately understand its implications. Again, this seriously concerns the teacher's own legal knowledge and understanding because he/she is the primary communicator of legal knowledge to the parents. If this communication is effective, then a positive working partnership should ensue between the parents

and the educators, thus providing quality education for the handicapped students.

Parents' Knowledge and Attitudes

Parents' views of the educational system and the accompanying law cover a wide spectrum. Some parents have an overall negative reaction to their child's handicap and continually seek shelter for the child. On the other extreme, some parents want their child totally integrated into the regular classroom environment (Harmon, 1979).

Parents typically perceive schools as being the ultimate authority concerning what is right for the children. Many parents also see their limited involvement as merely being in attendance at the IEP meeting. Unfortunately, in the past, many parents were told to be grateful for any services rendered, appropriate or not (Helge, 1980).

According to Kroth and Scholl (1978), there are some valid reasons for this lack of parental involvement. One reason is that parents feel alienated. The school personnel use unfamiliar language, and parents see this as mysterious. A second reason is that parents become disillusioned after their attempts to become involved are not acknowledged by educators and they feel that these efforts are in vain. Third, parents fear reprisals from the administration if they make decisions or suggestions contrary to the schools' wishes. Fourth, communication lines are somewhat unclear and parents are sometimes confused as to where to go for help and assistance. Helge

(1980) says there is sometimes a lack of interest shown by parents due to such factors as a fear and mistrust of the schools, attitudes of separation of home and school, and socioeconomic status. In conclusion, Helge stated that many parental negative feelings concerning special education are due to lack of education, feeling inferior, frequent intimidation by educators, and a lack of legal knowledge including student and parent rights and procedures of due process. Even with the parents present at meetings, parental involvement does not always occur. Therefore, the need for further staff development is evident in working with these parents of handicapped children.

In regard to professionals, parents actually want the truth, not avoidance of truth or answers where none are known. Educators may not always convey their concern to the parents, but the parents need to know if the concern is there. School personnel should communicate to the parents if they understand what will happen if they fail with the child. Educators often do understand and want to positively share this concern and anxiety with the parents (Abeson, 1980-81).

Study specifically concerning parental knowledge and/or attitudes of P.L. 94-142 and its implications has yet to be undertaken. Since the following research studies of parental attitudes are recent, it can be assumed that this study concerning parental knowledge and attitudes of legal issues will be negative at present.

Educators' Knowledge and Attitudes

The literature review reveals more negative than positive teacher attitudes towards the law. Harmon (1979) did, however, find that many special education teachers were pleased with the power that P.L. 94-142 granted them. This has been useful for securing special and additional services for the children.

Thompson (1980-81) found that some educators are uneasy with the more extensive parental involvement. Kroth and Scholl (1978) reveal similar findings of the educators' fearing parental involvement. Even though the value of this participation by parents is recognized, the teachers may not understand how to successfully coordinate the parent/teacher participation (Cohen, 1977).

Vasa (1980) found that teachers often relate that parents are not interested. A combination of reasons are attributed, including emotional factors and past experience in dealing with the school systems.

Since parental approval must be obtained in order to administer tests, teachers encountered problems in securing parental approval. According to Helge (1980), these problems were viewed by teachers as: 1) needs of personnel for working with the parents; 2) staff attitude that parents should assume passive roles; 3) misunderstanding by parents regarding testing; 4) parents' lack of interest; 5) problems in locating parents; and 6) parents needing to know their rights.

Shanker (1980-81) states that it is "profoundly naive" to believe that all parents demand the best and know what is best for

their children. Likewise, all school systems do not always put the child's best interest first.

Since the passage of P.L. 94-142, educators have had to deal with a whole new sphere of the educational process. Not only do educators need to familiarize themselves with the law, but they have to convey this knowledge to the parents. With parent/school involvement being minimal already, communicating relatively complicated legal rights may seem more overwhelming to the parents than it actually is.

Methods to Improve Parent/Teacher Communication

The more the school finds meaningful and productive ways to involve parents, the less likely are parents to need or use due process procedures. If the parent/educator communication is positive and successful, an appropriate education for the handicapped child is more likely to be secured, and the due process procedure will become less necessary (Kreth and Scholl, 1978).

Before beginning a parent involvement program, the school personnel must be convinced that the parents are a crucial and essential component of the system. In order for this involvement to emerge, there must be a commitment from both the parents and the educators to work together for the good of the involved handicapped children (Coletta, 1977).

Polifka (1981) conducted an Iowa study in which he sent questionnaires to parents of special education children concerning the formal staffings and the parents' satisfaction with P.L. 94-142.

Results showed that parents need to be more involved in their children's educational programming, especially in the IEP formation. Solution suggestions were to give the parents guidelines concerning the extent and construction of the IEP prior to the conference or meeting. Parents should also be more knowledgeable of their rights, including the right to appeal if they disagree with the outcome of the staffing.

Implementation of a team approach to satisfy the P.L. 94-142 mandates is suggested by Crisler (1979). It is quite difficult for one person, the teacher, to fulfill all the legal requirements of P.L. 94-142. Since the law implies directly that a combination of services is necessary to provide a child's educational needs, then a combination of personnel would seem to prove more efficient and effective in carrying out these services. Of great importance is the responsibility of the parents for input into the decision making. Crisler (1979) states that only through utilization of an "integrated team approach" can the handicapped child's needs be met, allowing also for the maximum success in implementing P.L. 94-142.

Canning (1979) has developed "The IEP Parent Involvement Training Guide." This explains to the parents what the IEP is, as well as its objectives, services, procedures, and implementation. The guide allows parents to self-examine their knowledge of IEP's and provides ways to prepare for an upcoming IEP. Canning (1979) gives suggestions for participation, which assists parents in pre-planning for the meeting. Lastly, she has prepared an evaluation form for use at the meeting. This allows parents to assess their

own preparation as well as analyze the results and outcomes of the IEP meeting.

Concerning the IEP, teachers can contribute to parent/teacher communication by holding conferences with parents, who are the best source of the child's future plans and goals as well as of his/her current status. For a successful conference to ensue, teachers should be able to interpret P.L. 94-142 and should plan on dealing with the parents' emotions. All these preparations and suggestions are to maintain work on the mutual goal—meeting the needs of the child (Darton and Bailey, 1979).

Abeson (1980) sees that parents are often already evaluators of their children, even before school age. This information is valuable to the schools, for no one else possesses this knowledge. Also helpful are parents' "hunches," hopes, and aspirations for their children.

Turnbull, Leonard, and Turnbull (1981) further state that the more the parents are involved in planning, participating, relating information, getting information, and counseling, the better they can handle their child after his or her education is complete. A misconception is that parents will step into the educators' places.

> Attitudes toward parental involvement . . . while nearly always officially affirmative and encouraged by school personnel and special education in particular, in reality, run the gamut from total disassociation to active participation and commitment required of parents for their children to continue to receive educational and therapeutic services. There is ample justification for alleviation of the constant pressures between educators and parents of exceptional children (Clements and Alexander, 1975).

To summarize, preparing and training parents in knowledge and procedures of P.L. 94-142 is crucial. For this to occur, positive communication must take place between the parents and teachers of handicapped children concerning these legal issues. If this communication is achieved, then the goal of improving handicapped children's education is more likely to be an end result.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Introduction

This study was designed to survey the knowledge, communication, and attitudes between parents and teachers concerning parental legal rights. In order to obtain this information, a questionnaire was designed by the investigator and a panel of special education experts. The population included teachers of special education resource and comprehensive development classes and the parents of those children in Anderson County, Tennessee.

Restatement of the Problem

The purposes of this study were as follows:

(a) To determine if there exists a significant difference in the knowledge score obtained from parents and teachers concerning provisions of P.L. 94-142.

(b) To determine if there exists a difference in the perceptions of parents and teachers about whether parents are informed of the legal provisions of P.L. 94-142.

(c) To determine if there exists a difference in parent and teacher perceptions of how parents are informed concerning P.L. 94-142.

(d) To determine if there exists a difference in the perceptions of parents and teachers of the effectiveness of

the communication process between parents and teachers concerning P.L. 94-142.

Limitations

There are limitations related to this study which require explanation. These limitations are as follows:

1. The population was limited to one county in East Tennessee. Therefore, the results may not be generalized to other areas of Tennessee or the United States due to the difference in population characteristics.
2. The experience level (years of teaching) and the interest level of the teachers are factors for which no control is made. First and second year teachers may respond differently than more experienced teachers. Given a teacher's busy schedule, his/her interest in responding to the questionnaire may be minimal.
3. The items on the questionnaire were sensitively scrutinized for readability, but literacy levels of parents may be a factor and no control was made for this.
4. The population investigated includes parents and teachers of handicapped children who are enrolled in a resource or comprehensive development class. This includes all elementary and secondary mentally retarded, learning disabled, and emotionally disturbed children in the Anderson County public schools.

Subjects

This study focuses on the perceptions of both parents and teachers concerning their communication and understanding of P.L. 94-142. In order to obtain these views, two samples were selected—parents of elementary and secondary school age handicapped children enrolled in resource or comprehensive development classes and special education teachers of these same classes in elementary and secondary schools. A total of 669 parents and 36 teachers were surveyed.

Design of the Instrument

To obtain the desired information from both the parents and the teachers, a questionnaire was devised to survey the main issues—knowledge of and communication of P.L. 94-142. Since no standardized testing instrument was available which would yield sufficient answers to the research questions, one was devised. Separate but parallel questions were generated for administration to parents of handicapped elementary and secondary school age children and to elementary and secondary special education teachers.

A series of questions was derived from an analysis of the state and federal legislation concerning handicapped children. Specifically, the areas of concern are those which mandate the parents' legal rights. The review of related literature also aided in the generation of survey questions, as recent study has disclosed. A team of experts chose from a total of 46 possible questions.

The 19 questions chosen by this team comprised the parent and teacher questionnaires (see Appendix B).

The survey made positive statements to which the respondent answered: strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, or strongly disagree. At the end of each questionnaire was an additional section asking for comments for any necessary clarification of response. The last question dealt with how communication takes place, and both parents and teachers were asked to check all that applied (see Appendix B).

Collection of the Data

The teacher sample for this study included every resource and comprehensive development class teacher from all but two schools in Anderson County, Tennessee. Approval was given by the Anderson County supervisory staff of Special Education. These teachers were asked to send questionnaires to parents of each of their students in the above-mentioned classes.

Questionnaires were hand-distributed to potential respondents with a cover letter attached (see Appendix B).

The initial response rate was less than 70 percent and contact effort was made through questionnaire redistribution and reminder letters to encourage participation. No codes or names were used, to preserve anonimity and to increase response rate.

Analysis of the Data

A chi square statistic was used to analyze the data. The selection of this procedure was based on the following:

1. The study is designed to measure parents' and teachers' knowledge of specific types of information.
2. The information received from the questionnaires was treated as nominal data.
3. The sample size was small.
4. The analysis dealt only with frequency data.
5. Individual events were independent of each other.
6. No theoretical frequencies were smaller than 5 if there were no more than 4 cells.
7. There was basis for the way the data were categorized.

A t-test statistic was selected for use in the analysis of Hypothesis 1 based on the following:

1. The mean knowledge scores of the two samples were compared.
2. The sample size was small.
3. Questions 1-10 dealt with the knowledge issue as stated in Hypothesis 1 and the responses were rated as yes/no rather than on the Leikert scale. Strongly agree and agree answers were scored as "yes" while undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree were scored as "no" responses.

Data analysis is discussed in Chapter IV along with the statistical results and conclusions.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

In this chapter, the data gathered from the questionnaire are presented and analyzed. Statistical analyses consist of frequency counts, percentages, chi square tests, and one t-test. The included tables and appendices show all the distributions of the results for both parents and teachers.

Data Collection

Data for the study were collected from a population of special education teachers and parents from elementary and secondary resource and comprehensive development classes in Anderson County, Tennessee. From a total of 669 distributed parent questionnaires, 142 responses were received, a 22.3 percent return. Of 36 teachers, 15 responded constituting a 42 percent return.

Data Analysis

To analyze the 19 questions, four statistical analyses were used. A t-statistic was used to compare the means of the parents' and teachers' knowledge scores. The questions concerning knowledge of the law, numbers 1 through 10, were scored as a yes/no response even though a Leikert scale was used.

A chi square test was used to analyze each individual question to compare the difference between parent and teacher responses. For the chi-square testing, a Yates correction for continuity was applied.

Frequency counts and frequency percentages were used along with the chi square analysis to examine more closely the specific areas of difference between parents and teachers. This data was helpful in pinpointing the differences, especially in Question 19, which was solely a frequency count with an unlimited response choice.

Results

Hypothesis 1: There is no difference between the mean knowledge score for parents and for teachers of provisions of P.L. 94-142.

A t-statistic was computed to compare the mean knowledge scores of teachers and parents. The mean score for teachers was 8.53 and for parents 7.58. A t-value of -2.47 for a two-tailed test with 155 degrees of freedom was significant at the .05 level (see Table I). Teachers do have better knowledge of the provisions of P.L. 94-142.

Responses to questions 1-10 were also analyzed independently with the chi square statistic equal to or greater than the .05 level of significance and 1 degree of freedom (see Table II). The responses of parents and teachers differed significantly on only questions 3, 7, and 10. Question 3 dealt with drawing up a specific IEP for each special education student. Question 7 dealt with the parental right to invite an advocate to the meetings to support the child. Question 10 stated that only the superintendent has the authority

TABLE I

Group Size, Means, Standard Deviations, and T-statistic of Parent and Teacher Knowledge Scores

	Parents	Teachers
N	142	15
Mean	7.58	8.53
Standard Deviation	2.14	1.19

$t = -2.47$; $p \geq .05$; $df = 155$.

TABLE II

Frequency of Responses, Percentages, and Chi Square Statistics of Parents and Teachers on Knowledge Questions 1-10

Questionnaire Item (from Teacher Questionnaire)	Parent		Teacher		χ^2	p
	Correct	Incorrent	Corrent	Incorrect		
1. Parental permission must be given to refer a child for assessment.	120 84%	22 16%	13 80%	3 20%	.112	.74
2. If a child is to be evaluated, the parents must be informed as to the nature of the evaluation.	126 89%	16 11%	15 100%	0 0%	2.876	.091
3. If the school decides that special education needs exist, a specific Individual Education Plan must be developed to meet those needs.	119 84%	23 16%	15 100%	0 0%	2.851	.05*
4. A child's IEP must have his/her parental approval.	109 77%	33 23%	11 73%	4 27%	.109	.74
5. The school must send parents a report of their child's progress which is evaluated every 6 weeks.	123 87%	19 13%	12 80%	3 20%	.326	.58
6. Parents have access to all school educational records kept on their child within 30 days after their request to see them.	129 91%	13 9%	14 93%	1 7%	.534	.53
7. Parents have the right to invite an advocate to meetings concerning their child.	101 71%	41 29%	15 100%	0 0%	6.536	.01*
8. Parent counseling and/or training are to be offered if requested.	88 62%	54 38%	11 73%	4 27%	.934	.66
9. Parents are to be informed of their due process rights at each M-team meeting.	105 74%	37 26%	10 68%	5 32%	.321	.58
10. After the IEP has been signed, only the superintendent has the authority to change it.	59 30%	83 70%	13 87%	2 13%	11.075	.001*

*$p \geq .05$; df = 4.

to change an IEP after it has been signed. This statement is false according to the law.

While the chi square statistic for question 2 did not reach the desired statistical significance level, it did indicate a difference between parents and teachers. This question dealt with informing parents of the nature of evaluation of their child. Based on these and the above analyses, Hypothesis 1 is rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no difference in the perceptions of parents and teachers about whether parents are informed of the legal provisions of P.L. 94-142.

The results of the chi square analysis concerning questions 11 and 12 showed that there is no significant difference between the perceptions of parents and teachers concerning parents being informed of legal provisions of P.L. 94-142 at the .05 level of significance and 4 degrees of freedom. The chi square value for question 11 was 6.395 with $p \geq .16$. For question 12, chi square was 7.733 with $p \geq .10$. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 has failed to be rejected (see Table III).

Hypothesis 3: There is no difference in parent and teacher perceptions of how parents are informed.

Chi square analysis, frequency count, and response percentages revealed that there is a significant difference between parent and teacher responses concerning how parents are informed of legal provisions. This hypothesis analyzed question 19 which concerned the methods by which teachers contact parents. The chi square value was

TABLE III

Frequency of Responses, Percentages, and Chi Square Results of Parent and Teacher Perceptions Concerning Whether Parents Are Informed of the Legal Provisions

Questionnaire Item (from Teacher Questionnaire)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	X^2	p
11. I send parents a report on their child's progress in special education every 6 weeks.							
Parents	18 13%	106 75%	10 7%	5 3%	3 2%	6.595	.16
Teachers	4 27%	9 60%	0 0%	2 13%	0 0%		
12. I ask parents to participate in the annual program review of their child.							
Parents	28 19%	87 62%	16 11%	10 7%	1 1%	7.733	.10
Teachers	5 33%	9 60%	0 0%	0 0%	1 7%		

14.056 with $p \geq .008$ at 4 degrees of freedom (see Table IV). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is rejected.

Hypothesis 4: There is no difference in the perceptions of parents and teachers of the effectiveness of the communication process between parents and teachers concerning P.L. 94-142.

The chi square statistics revealed that there is a significant difference between parents' and teachers' perceptions concerning the effectiveness of communication of legal information. These questions, 13-18, covered various aspects of the law to test the variedness of the communication. Since there is a significant difference in responses, Hypothesis 4 is rejected at the $p \geq .05$ level of significance (see Table V).

Summary

There do exist significant differences between parent and teacher responses concerning knowledge, communication, and attitudes of parental legal rights according to P.L. 94-142.

Hypothesis 1 revealed a difference between parents and teachers concerning their knowledge of the law. There were specific items on which parents and teachers were similarly aware of certain legal provisions but, overall, teachers had more understanding of the legal provisions of P.L. 94-142.

Hypothesis 2 was not rejected, suggesting that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of parents and teachers about whether parents are informed of the legal provisions of P.L. 94-142.

TABLE IV

Frequency of Responses, Percentages, and Chi Square Results of Parent and Teacher Perceptions of How Parents Are Informed of Legal Provisions

Questionnaire Item (from Teacher Questionnaire	Phone	Letter	Information in IEP	In Person	Other	X^2	p
19. Check all that are appropriate. I communicate to parents by:							
Parents	24 17%	93 45%	25 18%	77 54%	3 2%	14.056	.008
Teachers	12 80%	14 93%	12 80%	13 87%	2 13%		

df = 4.

TABLE V

Frequency of Responses, Percentages, and Chi Square Results of Parent and Teacher Responses Concerning Their Perceptions on the Effectiveness of Legal Communication

Questionnaire Item (from Teacher Questionnaire)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	x^2	p
13. Parents are adequately involved in their child's educational planning.							
Parents	21 15%	94 66%	20 14%	5 4%	2 1%	46.515	.00
Teachers	1 7%	3 20%	3 20%	8 54%	0 0%		
14. Parents understand their legal rights concerning their child's special education.							
Parents	16 11%	79 56%	29 20%	14 10%	4 3%	24.315	.00
Teachers	0 0%	2 13%	4 27%	7 47%	2 13%		
15. I am pleased with the communication between my students' parents and me.							
Parents	25 17%	94 66%	11 8%	11 8%	1 1%	27.526	.00
Teachers	0 0%	6 40%	1 7%	8 53%	0 0%		
16. There are too many demands put on Special Education Teachers due to P.L. 94-142.							
Parents	5 4%	30 21%	83 58%	19 13%	5 4%	9.931	.04
Teachers	1 7%	7 47%	3 20%	4 26%	0 0%		
17. I have adequate time for parent conferences.							
Parents	12 8%	57 40%	58 40%	13 9%	2 1%	37.264	.00
Teachers	0 0%	5 33%	0 0%	7 47%	3 20%		
18. Parents will request a hearing if they think their child's special education is not adequate or appropriate.							
Parents	37 26%	85 60%	12 9%	6 4%	2 1%	32.919	.00
Teachers	0 0%	5 33%	4 27%	6 40%	0 0%		

Hypothesis 3 showed a significant difference in parent and teacher perceptions of how parents are informed of their legal rights. Teachers claim to use all the forms of communication with high frequency while parents claim to receive information by phone and through IEP's with low frequency and through letters and in person with moderate frequency.

Hypothesis 4 showed a difference between parents and teachers concerning their perceptions of the effectiveness of the communication process. Parents generally perceive the communication process to be more effective than teachers do.

Conclusions and implications of these results are discussed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Restatement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to analyze the communication between parents and teachers of elementary and secondary children in resource and comprehensive development classes concerning parental legal rights. Specifically, the following questions were examined:

1. Do parents and teachers differ in their knowledge of P.L. 94-142?
2. Do the views of parents and teachers differ concerning the communication of legal provisions?
   a) Are the parents informed by the teachers?
   b) How are parents informed?
   c) How effective is the communication between parents and teachers?

Discussion and Implications

The first research question compared parents' and teachers' mean scores concerning their knowledge of P.L. 94-142. As determined by t-test and chi square statistics, there was a difference found between the parent and teacher scores. Questionnaire items 3, 7, and 10 were the significant factors in causing this difference. Item 3

stated that if the school decides that a special education need exists, a specific Individual Education Plan (IEP) must be developed to meet that need. It is possible that parents knew of the IEP in general, but not by its specific name. Many times we, as educators, neglect to explain or define our commonly used terms, such as M-team and IEP, even when the parents are actively involved with these processes. Since the IEP is usually reviewed and rewritten annually, the parents usually only see it once a year. Teachers, on the other hand, deal with an average of approximately 20-25 IEP's per year as well as dealing daily with the plan's goals and objectives.

The development of the IEP is a key provision of P.L. 94-142. In essence, it is a contract to provide special education services and is the basis for the evaluation of those services. Because of its importance to every public school child in special education, it is disheartening to discover that parents do not seem significantly aware of it.

Question 7 dealt with the right of parents to invite a supportive advocate to meetings concerning their child. Again, the terminology may not have been understood even though the parents may have been aware of this right. Although parents approved of and understood the evaluation procedure, they did not understand the right to an advocate which is an interesting point of difference. Parents understand that their permission must be obtained before an evaluation can take place, but they may not realize that they may question these evaluation procedures and they may be unfamiliar with the variety of evaluations which may be used. To the parents, the professional members of the

M-team are the experts. Given this assumption, the right to an advocate may seem unnecessary and possibly imply opposition to an otherwise cooperative endeavor.

The third question contributing to parent/teacher differences in knowledge of the law was question number 10 which said that after the IEP had been signed, only the superintendent has the authority to change it. Rarely do individual parents deal with the school superintendent regarding instructional issues. Therefore, they may not realize his or her role in the implementation of P.L. 94-142. In addition, this question was the only item which was an incorrect statement on the questionnaire and the data might be questioned on methodological grounds. Although 42 percent of the parents responded correctly showing their familiarity with the law, 87 percent of the teachers gave correct responses which statistically revealed a difference in knowledge.

Question 2 was not discussed in the statistical findings, but at the .09 level of significance, it is important in that it shows a trend and helped skew the statistics toward rejection of the hypothesis. The question said that if the child is to be evaluated, the parents must be informed as to the nature of the evaluation. Although the majority of parents knew this, a significant number did not, especially compared with the teachers who all agreed with the statement.

The differences between parents and teachers concerning their knowledge of the provisions of P.L. 94-142 found here is consistent with the findings of Carpenter and Robson (1979). It is interesting

to note that parents actually scored quite well on the knowledge questions. This may be due to the small sample size and to the fact that possibly the more knowledgeable parents were the ones who responded. Assuming this, it is possible that if more parents responded, the overall percentage of correct parent responses would be lower. Another interesting finding is the fact that the small sample of teachers did not score higher. However, the teachers and the parents in this study did score higher than those in the study of Carpenter and Robson (1979), assuming the knowledge questions were of comparable aspects of P.L. 94-142.

The second research question dealt with the views of parents and teachers concerning the communication of legal provisions. From statistics applied to the returned responses, there was found no significant difference between parents and teachers on whether the parents are informed by the teachers. It is encouraging to note that parents and teachers agree that they are communicating. This result indicates an improvement in contrast to the communication study results of Abeson (1980-81), Polifka (1981), and Helge (1980).

It should be noted that the two questionnaire items for this research question specifically refer to periodic progress reports similar to report cards and to annual program reviews. These do not specifically refer to legal provisions of P.L. 94-142, but to sources of and procedures similar to those used to inform parents of non-handicapped children of school progress. Provided that parents understood the terminology in the questions, it is understandable that they would answer positively to those questions since Anderson

County emphasizes prompt annual reviews and 6-week reports for all children enrolled in special education.

The third research question, which dealt with how communication takes place between parents and teachers, was the only item to which a forced response was not elicited. All respondents could check as many answers as were applicable to the way they perceived communication from teachers to parents. Results indicated a significant difference even though parents and teachers alike responded with more frequency to the processes of "letter" and "in person." In analysis of the percentages, the difference is made evident. Although parents saw letters and in person meetings as the primary source of communication, the number responding to those items included just over one-half of the parents. Parents do not frequently communicate with teachers by phone or through information in the IEP yet teachers responded frequently to these items as well as through letters and in person. These results may suggest that teachers may call a few parents frequently, and many not at all. Overall, this questionnaire item indicates that teachers perceive more communication existing than parents, although the communication parents do perceive is by similar means as the teachers.

The last research question, which dealt with communication effectiveness, is probably the most difficult to deal with because effectiveness is not easily analyzed. Six questionniare items were used for this item—questions 13-18. These dealt with various aspects of the law and included the following:

(a) Parental involvement in their child's educational planning (questionnaire item 13).

(b) Parental understanding of their legal rights concerning their child's special education (questionnaire item 14).

(c) Parents being pleased with the communication between their child's special education teacher and themselves (questionnaire item 15).

(d) Too many demands put on special education teachers due to P.L. 94-142 (questionnaire item 16).

(e) Teachers having time for parent conferences (questionnaire item 17).

(f) Parents asking for a hearing if they thought their child's special education was not adequate or appropriate (questionnaire item 18).

The chi square analysis revealed a significant difference between parents and teachers on every questionnaire item for this hypothesis. It was interesting to note that on every question dealing specifically with parental views of themselves and teachers' views of parents (numbers 13, 14, 15, and 18), the parent and teacher responses were strikingly different. Approximately two-thirds of the parents perceived themselves as being involved in their child's educational training while teachers disagreed. Parents largely agreed that they understood their legal rights having to do with their child's special education. Over one-half of the teachers disagreed with this item.

According to the statistical data from Hypothesis 1 dealing with knowledge, it seems that although parents perceive themselves as understanding their legal rights, they actually do not always understand. The testing of knowledge was limited to 10 questions and parents did respond correctly to many items. The items answered incorrectly seem to be highly misunderstood since only three items skewed the data to show that parents understood significantly less than teachers. Most parents, 84 percent, also responded that they were pleased with the communication between the special education teacher and themselves. Teachers again disagreed on this item.

This finding is interesting because the percentages of parental responses on item 19 were low. Only approximately 15 percent of the parents responded negatively or undecided to being pleased with the parent/teacher communication while on item 19, the data showed parents not perceiving as much communication as teachers. Teachers, on the other hand, perceived much more communication going on than parents but 53 percent were displeased with it. A large number of parents, 86 percent, responded that they would ask for a hearing if they thought their child's special education was not appropriate or adequate whereas many teachers responded negatively or were undecided.

Over one-half of the teachers agreed that P.L. 94-142 puts too many demands on them and some parents agreed, although most were undecided. That particular perception of the parents seems logical since parents have limited means of observing teachers fulfilling requirements of the law. Two-thirds of the teachers

disagreed that they have enough time for parent conferences. Parents, however, mostly agreed that teachers do have enough time for parent conferences although many were undecided. This seems to reinforce parents' perceptions that parent/teacher communication is adequate.

Teachers, overall, expressed negative perceptions concerning the effectiveness of their communication with parents and their attitude toward the law. This may indicate that those teachers who did not respond at all, 58 percent, had even more negative perceptions. Parents, in contrast, generally indicated positive perceptions concerning communication.

Recommendations

After completing the research project, many recommendations for further research have been made evident. These suggestions are expanded in the following list.

1. More reliable statistical results as well as enabling generalization of results could be made more secure by obtaining a larger population and sample. This study relied only on one county in the East Tennessee area and cannot be reliably generalized to any other area.
2. Demographic questions were originally planned but later omitted due to lack of space on the questionnaire and not wanting to discourage response because of too many questionnaire items. Demographic data would be helpful in determining such information as teacher experience

and age as well as parent age, occupation, family size and experience with special education.

3. Expanding the questionnaire would be beneficial due to being able to ask more questions appropriate to the research topic. In this particular study, a cross testing of items would have possibly explained some opposing responses. As one example, in testing parental perceptions on the effectiveness of communication, it would have been helpful to have had similar items in the knowledge section also to assure the researcher that the respondent was consistent in answering. Also, there was only one negative statement in the whole questionnaire. More negative items should have been randomly placed throughout.
4. Parents and teachers were both encouraged to write in any comments they may have had. Several of the teachers commented in writing and verbally that the questionnaire was too difficult for the parents. The difficulty of the questionnaire was taken into consideration while it was being devised, but some of the items could be stated in no simpler form. Parents, too, commented that they did not understand all of the questions. It is supposed that the majority of parents did not respond because of the difficulty of the questionnaire.
5. Some of the teachers reported that the best response they got from parents was when they gave them the questionnaire immediately before or after a parent conference. This

way, the teacher is on hand to assist in terminology. To attempt to prevent bias, though, it would be better if the researcher could present the questionnaire and handle any questions consistently with all respondents, although the researcher, too, may constitute a source of bias.

6. An alternative to the above recommendation is to interview each respondent. Of course, this is much more time consuming, but it also assures a much higher response return.

Conclusions

The information found through this study will be beneficial to administrators and teachers of special education even though much more research and study are needed. Because laws govern many of the procedures used in special education programs and because parents need to be an integral part of those programs, the more we actually know concerning parent/teacher communication of these legal processes, the more effective our programs will be for the handicapped children.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Tennessee Code Annotated, Volume 9, Chapter 29

> Section 49-2940. Effects of agreements. Any child given educational or related services and any parent or guardian of such child . . . shall continue to have all civil and other rights that he would have if receiving like education or related services within the subdivision or school district where he would normally attend public school.
>
> Section 49-2947. Parent's or guardian's right to review—Grounds—Procedure—Promulgation of rules and regulations for conduct of hearings—Judicial review. A child or his parent or guardian may obtain review of an action or omission by State or local authorities on the grounds that the child has been or is about to be:
>
> a. denied entry or continuance in a program of special education appropriate to his condition and needs.
> b. placed in a special education program which is inappropriate to his condition or needs.
> c. denied educational services because no suitable program of education or related services is maintained.
> d. provided with special education or other education to which he is entitled only by units of government or in situations which are not those having the primary responsibility for providing the services in question.
> e. assigned to a program of special education when he is not handicapped.

According to the Tennessee State Law, Tennessee Code Annotated, Volume 9, Chapter 29, handicapped children and their parents are granted the same rights, civil and otherwise, as are given to non-handicapped and their parents as they attend the public school.

Another parental right specified by law deals with review of the actions made by state and local authorities.

Section 49-2947 also delineates the responsibility of the public school to consult with parents regarding placement or program

changes, the right of the parents to request independent evaluation, placement, denial and notice of placement, access to records and hearing procedures.

Section 49-2948 involves the parent's right to enforce the provision for services. The school districts cannot authorize any delay in provision of these services. Section 49-2949 mandates that no child be removed from a school district without the parent's consent.

According to Public Law 94-142, entitled The Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 and referred to as 20 U.S.C., section 1401, all handicapped children in the United States are to be provided a free appropriate public education. This law provides for the procedural safeguard of hearings for the parents and gives the required procedures to be followed in the event parents wish to contest the appropriateness of services offered by the public school. Further regulations are spelled out in the codified 45 code of Federal Regulations 121a.1 and a selected few are introduced here.

Related services, in section 121a.13, includes "parent counseling and training" which means "assisting parents in understanding the special needs of their child and providing parents with information about child development." Also specified under these related services are special counseling services offered to parents of children with difficulties such as hearing loss and communicative disorders.

Section 121a.345, parent participation, includes the steps taken to insure that parents are present at each meeting and that

they are given the opportunity to participate. Parents must be included as mandated members of the State Advisory Panel, according to section 121a.651. The parents also must be fully and adequately informed of all their rights.

APPENDIX B

Dear Parent,

As a Special Educator, I, like yourself, support children with special educational needs. Authorities in the field of education have frequently reminded us of an obvious fact, that good cooperation and communication between teachers and parents enhances the possibility of good education for the student. I am currently conducting a research study which focuses on teacher/parent communication, particularly as it relates to the State and Federal laws which encourage parental involvement.

My objective in this study is to identify what information about the laws is being communicated. My assumption is that the better informed parents are, the more cooperative and supportive they will be.

Your child's Special Education Teacher has sent you this questionnaire. I would sincerely appreciate you taking approximately 10 minutes to review and respond to this questionnaire. I have distributed this questionnaire to all parents in Anderson County who have a child in elementary or secondary resource rooms. The teachers of these classes are also responding to a similar questionnaire.

No attempt will be made to identify which teacher or parent has or has not returned the questionnaire.

Please respond and return the questionnaire to your child's Special Education Teacher. Rest assured that no attempt will be made to identify you or your child's school.

A review of the results of this study will be made available at the participating schools.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Sarah K. Hauser

parent

Please read the following questions and respond by circling the item below each question that best reflects your opinion. Thank you!

1. The school must ask my permission to test my child for special education.
strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree

2. If my child is to be tested, I must be told the kinds of tests to be given.
strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree

3. If the school decides that my child needs special education, a specific plan (IEP) must be written to meet those needs.
strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree

4. I must approve my child's IEP.
strongly agree agree undecided disagree strongly disagree

5. The school must send me a report of my child's progress in special education every 6 weeks.
strongly agree agree undecided disagree strongly disagree

6. The school must allow me to see my child's educational school records within 30 days after I ask to see them.
strongly agree agree undecided disagree strongly disagree

7. It is my right to invite a supportive person to meetings about my child.
strongly agree agree undecided disagree strongly disagree

8. The special education law provides counseling and training for parents if requested.
strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree

9. I must be told about my rights at each M-team meeting.
strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree

10. After the IEP has been signed, only the superintendent has the suthority to change it.
strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree

11. The special education teacher sends me a report on how my child is doing in special education every 6 weeks.
strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree

12. The special education teacher has asked me to meet to discuss placement for the next year. strongly agree agree undecided disagree strongly disagree

13. I am involved in my child's special educational training.
strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree

14. I understand my legal rights that have to do with my child's special education.
strongly agree agree undecided disagree strongly disagree

15. I am pleased with the communication between my child's special education teacher and me.
strongly agree agree undecided disagree strongly disagree

16. There are too many demands put on special education teachers due to the special education law.
strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree

17. My child's special education teacher has enough time for parent conferences.
strongly agree agree undecided disagree strongly disagree

18. I would ask for a hearing if I thought my child's special education was not good enough or right for my child's needs.
strongly agree agree undecided disagree strongly disagree

Check all answers that apply to you.
My child's special education teacher communicates to me by:
____phone ____letter ____information in IEP ____in person ____other

Please feel free to clarify any of your responses by giving the questionnaire item number, then proceed. You are encouraged to make comments. Please use this space and the back of the form. Again, I thank you.

Dear Teacher,

As a Special Educator, I, like yourself, support children with special educational needs. Authorities in the field of education have frequently reminded us of an obvious fact, that good cooperation and communication between teachers and parents enhances the possibility of good education for the student. I am currently conducting a research study which focuses on teacher/parent communication, particularly as it relates to the State and Federal laws which encourage parental involvement.

My objective in this study is to identify what information about the laws is being communicated. My assumption is that the better informed parents are, the more cooperative and supportive they will be.

I have sent questionnaires for you and for the parents of all your students in resource. I would sincerely appreciate you taking approximately 10 minutes to review and respond to this questionnaire and to encourage the parents to return their answers. I have distributed this questionnaire to all parents in Anderson County who have a child in elementary or secondary resource rooms. All teachers of these classes also are asked to respond to a similar questionnaire.

No attempt will be made to identify which teacher or parent has or has not returned the questionnaire. Please respond and return the questionnaire and rest assured that no attempt will be made to identify you or your school.

A review of the results will be made available at the participating schools.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Sarah K. Hauser

teacher

Please read the following questions and respond by circling the item below each question that best reflects your opinion. Thank You!!

1. Parental permission must be given to refer a child for assessment.
strongly agree agree undecided disagree strongly disagree

2. If a child is to be evaluated, the parents must be informed as to the nature of the evaluation.
strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree

3. If the school decides that special education needs exist, a specific Individual Education Plan must be developed to meet those needs.
strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree

4. A child's IEP must have his/her parental approval.
strongly agree agree undecided disagree strongly disagree

5. The school must send parents a report of their child's progress which is evaluated every 6 weeks.
strongly agree agree undecided disagree strongly disagree

6. Parents have access to all school educational records kept on their child within 30 days after their request to see them.
strongly agree agree undecided disagree strongly disagree

7. Parents have the right to invite an advocate to meetings concerning their child.
strongly agree agree undecided disagree strongly disagree

8. Parent counseling and/or training are to be offered if requested.
strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree

9. Parents are to be informed of their due process rights at each M-team meeting.
strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree

10. After the IEP has been signed, only the superintendent has the authority to change it.
strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree

11. I send parents a report on their child's progress in special education every 6 weeks.
strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree

12. I ask parents to participate in the annual program review of their child.
strongly agree agree undecided disagree strongly disagree

13. Parents are adequately involved in their child's educational planning.
strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree

14. Parents understand their legal rights concerning their child's special education
strongly agree agree undecided disagree strongly disagree

15. I am pleased with the communication between my students' parents and me.
strongly agree agree undecided disagree strongly disagree

16. There are too many demands put on special education teachers due to P.L.94-142.
strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree

17. I have adequate time for parent conferences.
strongly agree agree undecided disagree strongly disagree

18. Parents will request a hearing if they think their child's special education is not adequate or appropriate.
strongly agree agree undecided disagree strongly disagree

Check all answers that are appropriate.
I communicate to parents by;
____phone ____letter ____information in IEP ____in person ____other

Please feel free to clarify any of your responses by giving the questionnaire item number, then proceed. You are encouraged to make comments. Please use this space and the back of the form. Again, I thank you.

VITA

Sarah Kathryn Hauser was born in Barbourville, Kentucky on May 22, 1955. She graduated from Knox Central High School in June 1973. In the fall of 1973, Sarah entered Centre College, Danville, Kentucky and studied there 2 years. She entered East Tennessee State University in the fall of 1975 and received her B.S. degree in Special Education in June 1978.

From October 1978 until August 1980, Sarah worked as a Residential Training Specialist at Oakwood, a facility for mentally retarded children and adults in Somerset, Kentucky. In the fall of 1980, she entered graduate school at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. While studying there, Sarah worked several months in a special training program for a deaf/blind child.

Sarah was employed by the Anderson County Board of Education in the spring of 1982 and she is presently employed there as an Elementary Special Education Resource Teacher. Her M.S. degree in Special Education was completed at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville in December 1983.