CADRE

Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education

Encouraging Meaningful Parent/ Educator Collaboration:

A Review of Recent Literature

Timothy Hedeen, Philip Moses and Marshall Peter

Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE)
Eugene, Oregon

July 2011

IDEAs that Work

The Technical Assistance ALLIANCE
for Parent Centers at Pacer Center
www.taalliance.org

National Association of
State Directors of Special Education
www.nasdse.org

National Dissemation Center
for Children with Disabilities
www.nichcy.org

Mediate.com
Resourceful Internet Solutions, Inc.
www.mediate.com

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to
Timothy Hedeen, Ph.D., Senior Consultant
Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE)
P.O. Box 51360, Eugene, OR 97405-0906
770-423-6879   Email: tkhedeen@yahoo.com

Introduction

All parents can and should participate meaningfully in their children's education, including those whose children receive special education services. The value of parent participation has been recognized under law since 1975, most recently as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (Coots, 2007). Many scholars and professionals in the field of special education have explored various approaches to collaboration since then, and research has demonstrated the benefits for all parties involved: from children and their families, to teachers and principals, to district administrators and the communities they serve.

Schools commonly involve parents through communication, consultation before decision-making, family opportunities at school, and support for home-based learning (see Epstein, 2001, and National Parent Teacher Association, 2008, among others). Almost four decades of research "have demonstrated that parent/family involvement significantly contributes to improved student outcomes" (Carter, 2002, p. 1). "The evidence is consistent, positive and convincing: families have a major influence on their children's achievement in school and through life" (Henderson and Mapp, 2002, p. 7). As Boyer has summarized, "The message is clear. It is simply impossible to have an island of excellence in a sea of community indifference, and when parents become school partners, the results can be consequential and enduring" (1995, p. 61).

The body of literature on collaboration in family/school relationships has continued to grow. Within that literature are rich insights and implications for improved practice. Complementing well-known work in this area (including Kalyanpur and Harry, 1999; Marzano, 2003; Friend and Cook, 2009; and the works cited previously), researchers have undertaken rigorous study of the complex dynamic between schools and families and published their work in a variety of outlets — some of which are inaccessible to educators and families who might benefit from the findings therein.

This document synthesizes findings from a number of recent academic studies and policy publications. Among the highlights is the idea that *involvement* may be too narrow a term to encapsulate the range and depth of partnerships that support students' success.

A Continuum of Collaboration

The term *collaboration* is often understood as a process, at other times as an outcome. Cook and Friend define it more broadly as "a *style* professionals select to employ based on mutual goals; parity; shared responsibility for key decisions; shared accountability for outcomes; shared resources; and the development of trust, respect, and a sense of community" (2010, p. 3). Research on community education practices across schools led another researcher to see a continuum of collaboration.

Amendt's master's thesis (2008) is based on intensive observation, interviews, and focus groups at two elementary schools in Saskatchewan. After comparing his data with the existing literature, he recognized that greater partnership between educators and parents occurs in stages along a progression, not as a singular event.

Increasing degree of collaboration and partnership

Informing   Involving   Engaging   Leading
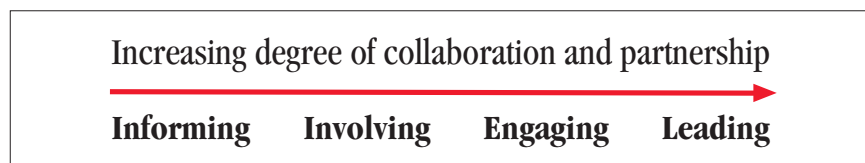
The first stage, *informing*, represents the one-way flow of communication from schools to students and parents. This falls short of the standard set by the National Parent Teacher Association (2008) that "families and staff engage in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication," yet may describe well the practices at many schools (Amendt, 2008).

Amendt draws an important distinction between the next two stages, *involving* and *engaging*, as he explains that involvement represents an invitation to parents to support an agenda determined by the school staff, while through engagement "the school staff, students, parents, and community members [together] create the agenda, make decisions, and take actions" (p. 3). His study suggests that involvement is marked by limited trust, while engagement develops a higher degree of trust. *Leading* occurs when the partners have created a norm of engagement, with all partners playing appropriate leadership roles as they work towards a shared vision. Amendt's interviews with faculty and parents at a school characterized by a high level of engagement found that both groups had invested effort to create the foundation of cooperation and goodwill that allowed their relationship to accrue greater trust.

The basis of such cooperation may be found in the work of the social psychologist Deutsch (1973), whose work informed S. R. Sweet Piantoni's dissertation research on professionals' experiences with conflict resolution in special education. She analyzed her interviews with 14 professionals in a Colorado school district through Deutsch's concept of positive and negative interdependencies (2010). Positive interdependencies exist when individuals believe their goal attainment relies on others' achieving their own goals. Readers may recognize this as a *win-win* relationship. Negative interdependencies occur when individuals believe their success relies on others' *not* attaining their own goals, a *win-lose* dynamic.

Deutsch later formulated his "crude law of social relations" based on these observations: competitive behavior by one party tends to elicit competitive behavior from the other, while cooperative behavior tends to elicit cooperative behavior. "Thus, cooperation induces and is induced by . . . readiness to be helpful, openness in communication, trusting and friendly attitudes, sensitivity to common interests and de-emphasis of opposed interests, orientation toward enhancing mutual power rather than power differences" (2006, p. 31.).

Untapped Resources

Despite parents' desire to participate deeply in their children's education, schools may often restrict participation opportunities, perhaps unwittingly channeling great potential energy to lighter tasks. Peterson's doctoral research (2010) at a Los Angeles school found that educators held "traditional notions" of parent involvement, primarily homework assistance, attending meetings, and volunteering in the classroom and school office. Further, communication from teachers to parents was not two-way, but "top-down" with teachers retaining the position of authority.

In her interviews with 20 parents of children with disabilities in Tennessee, Latham (2002) noted a broad range of experiences and satisfaction with family/school communication. Many parents reported that they felt the school communicated fairly well with families, and yet Latham presented their consensus as "[these] parents asked for more communication, clearer communication, and communication on a regular basis" (p. 92). Such interests in clearer, more regular communication reflect a desire to be better informed by the school, which would align with Amendt's stage of *informing* along the continuum of collaboration. It's noteworthy that one of Latham's participants observed that she and other parents could benefit from learning how to communicate better with the school, while another encouraged fellow parents to "just get involved."

Involvement may take many forms, however, and a student's and school's specific context will influence which forms are most appropriate and available. Through semi-structured interviews with elementary-school parents, Wanat's study (2010) reaffirmed Latham's findings: all parent participants wanted communication to include "frequent, specific information" and "immediate feedback" (p. 182). Parents of children with special needs complained that "they had not been informed or given suggestions until it was too late" (p. 183), highlighting the value of more timely interaction and more partnership with parents as resources. Across her interview subjects, Wanat found that parents who were involved with their children's school — especially in a manner involving direct contact with teachers — were more satisfied with the school than those parents who had not built relationships with teachers.

Parent involvement is determined in large part by parent motivation. Cucchiara and Horvat (2009) studied parental involvement through a comparative analysis of two urban schools, based on over 50 interviews and over 200 hours of participant observation. They described that each school's parent community had developed distinct goals for their involvement — parents at one school were predominantly motivated to participate for the benefit of their own children, while parents at the other school demonstrated high interest in enriching all students' experience. Their case studies "indicated that compared to a more individualistic approach to parental involvement, a collective orientation is more sustainable and has greater potential for benefiting all children in the school" (p. 999). This suggests that a broader focus of parents' energies — for the good of the school and of all their children, not just the good of their own children — leads to more effective involvement.

The *involvement* stage follows *informing*, but is shy of *engagement*. Gordon's robust doctoral study (2010) of parent and community engagement at six schools addresses this distinction. She focused on two schools in each of three medium-to-large school districts, conducting interviews and site visits at each school. She concluded that schools should "involve parents in roles beyond the superficial tasks often allocated to them (e.g., coordinating social events, fundraising through bake sales)" (p. 162). These activities — bake sales, movie nights — fit within Amendt's stage of *involving* parents. They do not *engage* parents. While Wanat's study reported that even such "traditional" and "superficial" involvement provides parents a "sense of worth" (2010, p. 168), Gordon observed that "many parents feel marginalized because they are given tasks that do not reflect the crucial role they could otherwise play in support of their children's education" (pp. 162-3). These parents' interests are aptly summarized in the title of a recent book, *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships* (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, and Davies, 2007).

In their review of studies comparing districts' efforts to promote constructive family/school relationships, Staples and Diliberto (2010) summarize that "the fundamentals of parent involvement needed for successful parent-teacher collaboration within a school environment include (a) building parent rapport, (b) developing a communication system with a maintenance plan, and (c) creating additional special event opportunities for parent involvement" (p. 60). The initial steps of building rapport may require schools to reach out, as noted by a PTA member interviewed in Wanat's study: "Parents want the invitation. They want to feel like they are being singled out, to be specifically asked for something. If you say, 'I think this would be really good for you to do,' then they think, 'Gosh, you're probably right. I've got some worth'" (2010, p. 169). Such an invitation is consistent with Deutsch's expectation that openness begets cooperation.

Educating Educators

If schools and parents are to move together along Amendt's progression from *informing* through *involving* and into *engaging*, they would do well to learn how to coordinate efforts, exchange information, and engage in joint decision-making. Fisher (2009) studied the sources of conflict about special education between schools and parents, finding that "the combination of 'systemic cracks' [limited resources, staff attrition, restrictive mandates] in the nation's educational system and the failure of professionals and parents to use effective communication and collaboration skills were found to be the major sources of conflict" (p. 13).

In a study of 30 Texas elementary schools consistently rated as exemplary in student outcomes, Fix-Turkowski (2003) sought to discern successful approaches to parent involvement. Her research highlighted the value of direct communication and an invitational, welcoming environment for parents. She noted, "It is far more effective to engage in preventative problem-solving than to address problems after they develop" (p.149). Theories of conflict interaction suggest that once a problem arises, parties are likely to act defensively, thus setting up a dynamic of competition, not cooperation. Fix-Turkowski argues that personnel preparation is necessary to seed such prevention: "For the field of education, this must take place in the college classrooms, internships and field placements" (p. 149). Similarly, Fisher concluded that "institutions of higher education, state and local education agencies must offer professional development to educational leaders, teachers, and parents. Pre-service and in-service trainings are necessary to provide knowledge and skills for preventing or resolving conflicts" (2009, p. 135).

Fortunately, many universities do offer courses in these areas, and many teachers and administrators learn the principles and skills of family involvement in their pre-service education. Through surveys of pre-service teachers in a graduate course on collaboration, Hamilton-Jones (2009) found that her participants developed both a strong commitment to working with families and confidence in their abilities to do so. Both pre-service and in-service training on communication have shown promise too. McNaughton and colleagues have conducted research on the benefit of listening-skills training for educators, finding significant improvements in their abilities, as demonstrated through both testing and parents' assessments (McNaughton, Hamlin, McCarthy, Head-Reeves, and Schreiner, 2008, ; McNaughton and Vostal, 2010).

Blue-Banning and colleagues (2004) conducted extensive focus group and interview research with parents and professionals in Kansas, Louisiana, and North Carolina to understand the components of positive family-school relationships. Through 33 focus groups and 32 individual interviews, they discerned six indicators of professional behavior that facilitate collaborative partnerships: communication, commitment, equality, skills, trust, and respect. The emphases on mutual respect, frequent communication, and flexibility led them to conclude, "common sense and ordinary human decency are at the heart of positive partnerships" (p.181). These complement well the skills identified in their and others' studies.

Educating Parents

As noted by Rosenberg, Lopez, and Westmoreland of the Harvard Family Research Project (2009), family engagement is a responsibility shared by schools, communities, *and* families. Research with parents of children receiving special education services has found that they must often play the role of advocate. Not only do they advocate for resources or services, but as Peterson's research suggests, they advocate *within* their relationships to schools because hierarchical relationships between parents and professionals are prevalent, with parents having the lower-status position (2010, p. 121). While other research cited here addresses the value of more balanced relationships, this finding suggests the need for — and the value of — parent training in advocacy and collaboration skills.

Trainor conducted individual interviews and focus groups with 33 parents of children receiving special education services and identified four approaches to parent advocacy: intuitive advocate, disability expert, strategist, and systemic change agent (2010). Stoner and Angell (2006) interviewed eight parents of children with autism spectrum disorder and found a similar set of roles: negotiator, monitor, supporter, and advocate. Their work suggests that educators and other professionals would do well to recognize the benefits of parents assuming these multiple roles, such as the positive effects of enhanced self-esteem and well-being, while also appreciating that some parents may choose to engage in none or only some of these roles and only some of the time.

The idea that parents' investment in their children's education will vary according to their interest and ability is also related to Trainor's work. Her article focuses on social and cultural capital — that is, connections to others and access to information — and emphasizes the need to engage all parents in a collaborative process that is respectful of families' diversity. As she concludes, "One does not want to promulgate a system where one provides a set of services or a standard of quality educational opportunities for youth with disabilities whose parents are effective advocates and another for those who are not" (p. 46). As part of a study to explore strategies for educating parents to be effective advocates, Glang, McLaughlin, and Schroeder developed a video program on CD-ROM, entitled *Brain Injury Partner*, to teach communication and advocacy skills (2007). The researchers randomly assigned 31 parents or other family members of youth with traumatic brain injury (TBI) to view either this program or a more general informational video on childhood TBI. All parents were asked to complete pre- and post-viewing assessments to gauge their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavioral intention related to parent-teacher interaction. Participants who viewed the advocacy-skills program showed statistically significant gains in measures of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, while participants who viewed the more general program did not realize such gains. The coauthors noted that web-based courses are "particularly advantageous for families . . . because they are accessible at any time and allow parents to learn and practice skills in a self-paced, private environment" (p. 204). Also, the researchers purposely titled the advocacy-focused program to include the word partners to promote the concept that "for children to have successful school experiences, their parents and teachers must work collaboratively" (p. 199).

These studies highlight parent preparation and family attitudes toward partnership, indicating the necessity of joint responsibility for fostering family/school engagement. This emphasis on joint efforts is demonstrated in the work of the national network of Parent Training and Information Centers (PTIs) and Community Parent Resource Centers (CPRCs) and in the work of the IDEA Partnership. It also reflects the shift made by the National Parent Teacher Association in 2008 when refocusing and renaming the *National Standards on Parent/Family Involvement Programs* (for schools) as the *National Standards for Family-School Partnerships* (for parents, schools, and communities).

Leadership and Structure as Part of the Solution

Murray and Mandell (2006) conducted interviews with 19 early childhood special education providers located in six states, all of whom had completed graduate programs emphasizing family involvement. All of the respondents reported employing family-centered practices in their work, "but the large majority . . . also identified significant barriers, including lack of support from colleagues and administrators and lack of policies related to working with families" (p. 125). Such findings suggest that training alone is insufficient. Leadership and policy guidance are necessary to support a shift toward greater parent engagement efforts, even in those schools where professionals have received specific training related to family-school collaboration.

The key role of district- and school-level leadership has been underscored by similar findings across recent rigorous comparative research and intensive single-site studies. Woody (2010) conducted close, extensive observation of a school highly engaged with parents and community. His dissertation concludes with strategies for effective partnerships. Rooted in both observation and administrators' reflections, these include broad imperatives such as "build an atmosphere of respect for the school and everyone in it" and "model the community you want to have," along with hard-won insights like "don't start too big; look at one small initiative first, then grow upon it" (pp.106-7). These suggestions resonate with recommendations by Mueller (2004) and Gordon (2010) from their respective comparative dissertation studies.

Mueller's research has demonstrated that when school leadership supports development of effective parent-school relationships, the benefits are many. With specific attention to communication, trust, collaboration, and parent education, school administrators can foster positive changes in parent engagement and student success. Mueller's study demonstrates a "dramatic 'before and after' picture," with a transition from due process hearings to strong partnerships (2004, p. 252).

In accord with the practices and approaches recommended by Woody above, Gordon's research across districts and schools highlights the value to district leaders of dialogue and training around parent involvement. She suggests that pertinent topics for such discussions would include "partnering with parents and community members in school-improvement efforts, parents as vital partners in the learning process, the importance of shared leadership, and the critical role that the community plays in every child's life" (2010, p. 162).

These recommendations align with two other recent works. Mueller, Singer, and Draper conducted comparative research (2008) on conflict prevention and dispute resolution efforts in two California districts, both of which had experienced substantial decreases in due process hearing requests. Through interviews, observations, and document review, the researchers found that prior to major overhauls of each district's special education resources, parents were largely excluded from decision-making processes. Partnerships with parents, relationship building, and teacher and parent support were among the system-wide changes effected by new leadership in response to parental dissatisfaction.

Sweet Piantoni's dissertation (2010) sought to identify the qualities of relationships that foster partnerships and prevent conflict. Based on her research, she characterized collaborative parent and professional partnerships as engaging in open and honest communication, taking responsibility for working together as a team across home and school environments, sharing common goals, and engaging in mutual child-centered decision-making in order to move children forward and create positive student outcomes (p. 73). These qualities require strong leadership and clear structures and, if achieved, would mark a schools' attainment of Amendt's *engaging* phase.

Recommendations

The major themes across recent research offer support for and some refinement of recommendations presented in earlier studies:

1. *Any stakeholder may initiate a deeper partnership between families and schools, but all involved must work to sustain it.* The initiative to enhance parent-school engagement may begin with one or more champions from any stakeholder group, but it will be sustained through broad collaboration and district leadership commitment. "Effective programs to engage families and community embrace a philosophy of partnership. The responsibility for children's educational development is a collaborative enterprise among parents, school staff, and community members" (Henderson and Mapp, 2002, p. 51).

2. *Every school community must define parent/school engagement locally, recognizing that no two communities are identical.* The process of co-creating a definition provides a foundation for strong partnership. "A shared vision of family engagement" is the first of five promising practices identified in a review of six large school systems with experience in systemic family engagement (Westmoreland, Rosenberg, Lopez, and Weiss, 2009). Research on parents' and professionals' perspectives on constructive engagement has found that these groups overlap most clearly on four themes: open and consistent communication, honesty, respect, and trust (Sweet Piantoni, 2010, p. 79), and that a "dialogue between parents and professionals might result in greater understanding . . . and clarification of the meaning of terms like 'respect,' 'trust,' and 'commitment' in the context of a given community" (Blue-Banning et al., 2004, p.181).

3. *Specific training in communication skills and collaborative approaches should be a priority for teachers, administrators, and parents.* Many studies have suggested or shown the benefits of such training (see Carter, 2003, pp. 81-84), and others highlight the value of a collaborative approach among professionals (see Mueller, Singer, and Draper, 2008).

4. *Schools, school districts, PTAs, and others should create policies, structures, and events to support family/school engagement, including informal opportunities for interaction of all stakeholders.* Talbot has documented the value of integrating outreach activities, special events, and parent-teacher committees to invite and sustain a sense of community (1998) and Mueller has found that "districts can structure their systems in a way that fosters the parent-school partnership so that in the end everyone is satisfied, especially the child" (2004, p. 253).

5. *Families and schools should recognize the occasional need for outside assistance, from resources or individuals beyond the immediate stakeholders.* Studies, including Fisher (2009), have demonstrated the value of parent-assistance centers, IEP facilitators, and dispute resolution agencies. The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence has developed a process to facilitate engagement of parents and teachers in a conversation about priorities and ways to meet them (2003).

6. *Schools and parents should consider how technology can support their relationships.* Clear communication can be promoted through a combination of in-person and online channels. Many districts have developed websites, social media outlets, blogs, and e-mail distribution systems to engage families, not simply inform them. Westmoreland and colleagues (2009) highlight the use of a family engagement blog in Prince George's County,

Maryland, and a phone and e-mail system employed by Wichita Public Schools. The National PTA implementation guide spotlights a Decatur, Alabama, elementary school principal's invitation to all parents to use the school's e-mail system to facilitate two-way communication (2009).

Every child's education takes place within a relationship of families and professionals. As parents and schools learn the value and methods of collaboration, they can create together an educational environment that supports the abilities of all children to succeed.

References

Amendt, T. (2008). *Involvement to engagement: Community education practices in a suburban elementary school and an inner-city community school*. Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK, Canada.

Blue-Banning, M., Summer, J.A., Frankland, H.C., Nelson, L.L., & Beegle, G. (2004). Dimensions of Family and Professional Partnerships: Constructive Guidelines for Collaboration. *Exceptional Children 70*(2), 167-184.

Boyer, E. (1995). *The basic school: A community for learning.* Princeton, NJ: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Carter, S. (2002). *The impact of parent/family involvement on student outcomes: An annotated bibliography of research from the past decade.* Eugene, OR: CADRE.
Available at http://www.directionservice.org/cadre/parent_family_involv.cfm.

Carter, S. (2003). *Educating our children together: A sourcebook for effective family-school-community partnerships.* Eugene, OR: CADRE. Available at http://www.directionservice.org/cadre/EducatingOurChildren_01.cfm.

Cook, L., & Friend, M. (2010). The state of the art of collaboration on behalf of students with disabilities. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 20*, 1-8

Coots, J. J. (2007). Building bridges with families: Honoring the mandates of IDEA. *Issues in Teacher Education*, *16*(2), 33-40.

Cucchiara, M. B., & Horvat, E. M. (2009). Perils and promises: Middle-class parental involvement in urban schools. *American Educational Research Journal, 46*(4), 974-1004.

Deutsch, M. (1973). The resolution of conflict. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Deutsch, M. (2006). Cooperation and competition. In M. Deutsch, P. T. Coleman, & E. C. Marcus (Eds.), *The handbook of conflict resolution* (pp. 23-42). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Epstein, J. L. (2001). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools.* Boulder, CO: Westview.

Fisher, A. (2009). *Exceptionality and parent-professional conflict: Causes, prevention, and resolution.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Arizona, Tucson.

Fix-Turkowski, V. R. (2003). *Parental engagement beliefs and behaviors of consistently exemplary schools.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.

Friend, M., & Cook, L. (2009). *Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals* (6th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Glang, A., McLaughlin, K., & Schroeder, S. (2007). Using interactive multimedia to teach parent advocacy skills: An exploratory study. *Journal of Head Trauma Rehabilitation, 22*(3), 198-205.

Gordon, M. F. (2010). *Bringing parent and community engagement back into the education reform spotlight: A comparative case study.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

Hamilton-Jones, B. M. (2009). *Preparing for collaboration: Pre-service special education teachers' perspectives and beliefs.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Georgia, Athens.

Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement.* Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. Available at http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/fam33.html

Henderson, A. T., Mapp, K. L., Johnson, V. R., & Davies, D. (2007). *Beyond the bake sale: The essential guide to family-school partnerships.* New York: The New Press.

Kalyanpur, M., & Harry, B. (1999). *Culture in special education: Building reciprocal family-professional relationships.* Baltimore: Brookes.

Latham, S. L. (2002). *Parents' perceptions of communication practices with school professionals during initial years of special education placement.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City.

Marzano, R. J. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

McNaughton, D., Hamlin, D., McCarthy, J., Head-Reeves, D., & Schreiner, M. (2008). Learning to listen: Teaching an active listening strategy to pre-service education professionals. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 27,* 223-231.

McNaughton, D., & Vostal, B. (2010). Using active listening to improve collaboration with parents. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 45*(4), 251-256.

Mueller, T. G. (2004). *A tale of two districts fostering the home-school partnership: Conflict prevention and alternative dispute resolution practices in special education.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California-Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara.

Mueller, T. G., Singer, G. H. S., & Draper, L. M. (2008). Reducing parental dissatisfaction with special education in two school districts: Implementing conflict prevention and alternative dispute resolution. J*ournal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 18*(3), 191-233.

Murray, M. M., & Mandell, C. J. (2006). On-the-job practices of early childhood special education providers trained in family-centered practices. *Journal of Early Intervention, 28*(2), 125-138.

National Parent Teacher Association. (2008). *National standards for parent/family involvement partnerships.* Available at www.pta.org

National Parent Teacher Association. (2009). *PTA national standards for parent/family involvement partnerships: An implementation guide.* Available at www.pta.org

Peterson, K. (2010). *Connecting parents and schools: Examining perceptions and building bridges to a more unified education community.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence. (2003). *Parents and teachers talking together: A handbook for facilitators.* Available for purchase through the Center for Parent Leadership at http://www.prichardcommittee.org/

Rosenberg, H., Lopez, M. E., & Westmoreland, H. (2009). Family engagement: A shared responsibility. *Family Involvement Network of Educators Newsletter I*(4). Available at http://www.hfrp.org/FINENovember2009

Staples, K. E., & Diliberto, J. A. (2010). Working with parents of students with disabilities. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 42*(6), 58-63.

Stoner, J. B., & Angell, M. E. (2006). Parent perspectives on role engagement: An investigation of parents of children with ASD and their self-reported roles with education professionals. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 21*(3), 177-189.

Sweet Piantoni, S. R. (2010). *Professionals' perceived qualities for collaborative parent and professional partnerships.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

Talbot, P. A. (1998). *Critical beginnings: Creating school community for all children and families.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg.

Trainor, A. (2010). Diverse approaches to parent advocacy during special education home-school interactions: Identification and use of cultural and social capital. *Remedial and Special Education, 31*(1), 34-47.

Wanat, C. L. (2010). Challenges balancing collaboration and independence in home-school relationships: Analysis of parents' perceptions in one district. *The School Community Journal, 20*(1), 159-185.

Westmoreland, H., Rosenberg, H. M., Lopez, M. E., & Weiss, H. (2009). *Seeing is believing: Promising practices for how school districts promote family engagement.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project and National Parent Teacher Association. Available at http://www.hfrp.org/SeeingIsBelieving

Woody, A. M. (2010). *Educational leaders as catalyst for connecting school and community: Uncovering leadership strategies for forging school, family, and community partnerships.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of North Carolina-Greensboro, Greensboro.
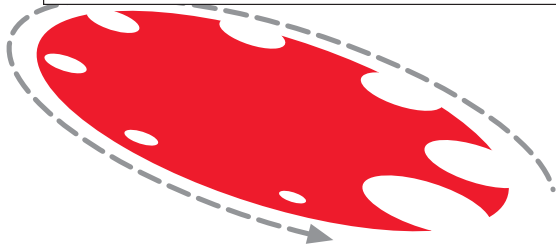
The Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE) works to increase the nation's capacity to effectively resolve special education disputes, reducing the use of expensive adversarial processes.

CADRE works with state and local education and early intervention systems, parent centers, families and educators to improve programs and results for children with disabilities.

CADRE is funded by the Office of Special Education Programs at the US Department of Education to serve as the National Center on Dispute Resolution in Special Education.

CADRE's Priorities

- *Identify effective, cost-beneficial dispute resolution practices and support their implementation*

- *Enhance collaboration between education/early intervention agencies and parent organizations*

- *Promote improved problem-solving skills across stakeholder groups*

- *Assist states to implement the dispute resolution provisions of IDEA'04*

- *Support integration of dispute resolution management and improved state system performance*

- *Compile State Performance Plan data and information on the characteristics of state systems*