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Improving Collaboration with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Parents of Students with Extensive Support Needs

Isabel Yates
Dominican University of California

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This thesis, written under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor and approved by the program chair, has been presented to and accepted by the Department of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education.

Isabel Yates
Candidate

Jennifer Lucko, PhD
Program Chair

Katherine Lewis, PhD
First Reader

Zoee Bartholomew, EdD
Second Reader

Improving Collaboration with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Parents of Students

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By

Isabel Yates

A culminating thesis submitted to the faculty of Dominican University of California in partial

fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to understand how to improve collaboration between schools and culturally and linguistically diverse parents of students with extensive support needs who receive special education services. Previous research defined collaboration as a conceptual construct in which principles of shared respect and responsibility are applied to practice (Emmons & Zager, 2018). The collaboration between families and schools is legally mandated but not explicitly explained to teachers or parents how to succeed in engaging respectfully with all families (Cheatham & Lim-Mullins, 2018). The increased complication of supporting nondominant, culturally and linguistically diverse families in addition to the complexity of extensive support needs of many students in special education add additional barriers to successful and balanced collaboration (Harry, 2008). The reviewed research does not address the multifaceted aspects of collaboration and how CLD parents struggle to feel like an integral part of the team, especially those parents of students with extensive support needs (Olivos, Gallagher, & Aguilar, 2010). The goal for this study was to understand how to achieve equitable collaboration that improves student outcomes. This qualitative study surveyed five Spanish speaking parents (four women and one man) and eleven teachers (four men and seven women) and included interviews with two parents (one man and one woman), all from the same non-public school. The findings document how collaboration is defined by parents and teachers and that communication is a building block for collaboration. Findings also highlight barriers to collaboration and effective strategies for equitable collaboration. This project's findings are significant in that there are implications for equity of collaboration between parents and schools with a concentrated focus on the CLD parents of students with extensive support needs.

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Introduction

Collaborate smarter not harder. Teachers must communicate openly and honestly, oftentimes with the most challenging parent or student. This can create a stress that does not allow for teachers to engage with equitable collaboration because of fear that any communication, a phone call, or text message, could lead to negative repercussions. It can mean an hour after school speaking to a parent past the time that they are expected to be at work. This communication may require engagement with a translation application or finding a support person to write back to a parent in their preferred language. There are, however, unavoidable aspects of teaching and collaboration that are the responsibility of the teachers to complete. Previous research has found that there is non-equitable collaboration between culturally and/or linguistically diverse parents of students with extensive support needs. The collaboration between families and schools is legally mandated but not explicitly explained to teachers or parents how to succeed with respect for all families (Cheatham & Lim-Mullins, 2018).

There is an increased complication for nondominant, culturally and/or linguistically diverse families in addition to the complexity of extensive support needs of many students in special education, which adds additional barriers to successful and balanced collaboration (Harry, 2008). The future of equitable collaboration starts with a humble openness from both parents and teachers to create a space for engagement with the shared goal of increased student achievement and success at school and in their lives. Parents, teachers, and the other members of the student's service provider team can bring their own expertise, perspectives, and knowledge to improve the student's life.

Teachers and parents are required to collaborate if the student is eligible for special education services (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400,

2004). The responsibility of the successful collaboration falls to the schools and districts but most specifically to the teachers. Research shows that when the collaboration is successful, the achievement of students increases (Cheatham& Lim-Mullins, 2018). There are many roadblocks to successful implementation of the collaboration and there is not much research that explains the differences or difficulties that are added when the student has extensive support needs- "Creating the conditions for true collaborative decision making that captures all of a student's learning-related needs may require a great deal of effort, creativity, and advanced planning on the part of the special education team" (Liu & Barrera, 2013, p. 40). This level of planning to ensure collaboration adds to the stress and burnout associated with teaching, specifically in Special Education- "Managing collaborative relationships with general education teachers, paraprofessionals, service providers, and parents are linked to increased stress for special education teachers throughout literature on burnout" (Hester et al., 2020, p. 350). The management of all these relationships can create a negative impact on the time and energy available to teachers to directly collaborate with culturally and linguistically diverse parents. In fact, "Outcomes associated with burnout include teacher attrition, teacher health issues, and negative student outcomes" (Brunsting, et al., 2014, p. 681). One goal of this thesis project is to increase equitable collaboration in a meaningful way without causing additional burnout of special education teachers.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to answer the following questions: (1) How might educators foster equitable collaboration between schools and parents from nondominant and/or culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) families with students with extensive support needs? (2) What do non dominant/CLD parents of students with extensive support needs believe is the key to

effective collaboration? (3) What do teachers of students with extensive support needs believe is key to effective collaboration? (4) How might teachers lead a team of service providers, schools, and school districts toward more equitable collaboration with non-dominant/CLD parents of students with extensive support needs? These questions represent topics that were brought forward from previous research. The distinction of this research project is the focus on the parents and/or caregivers and the teachers as the most important facilitators of collaboration focused on the achievement of the student with extensive support needs. Previous research from as early as 1996 has specifically targeted what was previously defined as multicultural considerations to collaboration (Sileo, et al., 1996). In more contemporary research, Buren stated that collaboration issues are: "(a) power barriers, (b) language and communication barriers, (c) relationship barriers, and (d) collaboration barriers" (Buren, 2020, p. 273). These barriers are explored in this study, but participants were asked to name and define their own barriers through their own experiences.

There are studies that more specifically inspect the intersectionality of CLD parents of children with extensive support needs. For example, Mortier et al. (2021) researched Latinx families with students with extensive support needs. This thesis, like Mortier's study, allows for increased equitable access for this specific group. It also has the potential to improve collaboration for other parents from nondominant groups. There are limitations of reviewed research and a gap in knowledge remains as there is a need for continued engagement of all CLD parents to create truly equitable collaboration.

Overview of the Research Design

The study participants were parents and teachers at a non-public school in a suburban community in Northern California; the school serves students from kindergarten to Post

Secondary age with students exiting at twenty-two years old. The students are placed at the school when their needs are not met by their home district of eligibility, which is a decision made by the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team. The students come from surrounding districts based on their more extensive support needs as the school specializes in behavioral challenges. The demographics of the parent participants were: 30-52 years old; four of the five were mothers, with one father participant; and their primary language spoken for all participants was Spanish. The demographics of the teacher participants were: 24 to 76 years of age; three of the eleven teachers were male; and only one participant spoke Spanish; the rest were English-only speakers. The participants were selected from the school the researcher worked at and all CLD parents at the school were asked to volunteer to participate in the study.

This qualitative study was conducted through surveys sent to both parents and teachers in Spanish and English, respectively. The participants were then asked to engage in a follow up interview, which two parents chose to continue to complete. These interviews were conducted in Spanish and later translated into English. The data collected was coded through open coding, peer coding, and focused coding. As Maxwell (2013) suggested, the following tools were used: analytic memos, categorizing the codes, and connecting strategies to compile the codes into more broad themes. Finally, in the last stage of analysis, narrative summaries were used to engage with the interview and survey data.

Significance of the Study

       This study is significant because it has a narrow focus on a small and important group of parents in need of support and improved methods for equitable collaboration. The parents in this study considered their effective collaboration experiences as high (9.5 out of 10), while the teachers rated their effective collaboration as only 7.54 (out of 10). Teachers' answers indicated a lower confidence in their ability to collaborate effectively with these students and their families. Further research is needed here, especially with other subgroups of parents of children with extensive support needs. This study adds to the conversation directly with the parents and the teachers who are doing the collaboration work now. Their direct and unfiltered perspectives can lead to better understanding and future implementation of more equitable collaboration. This study addresses one sample of a large under-researched population. The teachers and parents experience high levels of stress and little time to collaborate, let alone engage in research projects. It was the intention of this project to create a meaningful explanation of the experiences of these participants and show how those experiences can help shape school, district, state, and federal policy for collaboration.

Research Implications

       This research has implications for teachers, parents, districts, and LEAs (Local Education Agencies) as there is a need to engage in analysis of the collaboration in their unique settings. The onus of collaboration often falls purely on the parents, teachers, and therapists of students with extensive support needs. This study chose to focus on the parents' and teachers' perspectives, observations, and issues with collaboration. The answers to questions about how to improve collaboration practices should not come from a board room of administrators, but directly from the parents first and foremost. The selection of culturally and linguistically diverse

parents was an intentional decision to bring their voices out and amplify their opinions and knowledge of their own children, their needs, and their hopes for their children's futures. This research aims to share the parents' voices and to engage with teachers to assure them of some successes, some areas of growth, and how to create a relationship of trust as the foundation of collaboration.

This research also has implications for teacher preparation programs, as guides for future teachers should present studies that show the methods, struggles, and requirements of collaboration with CLD parents. The focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion in such preparation programs should include the intersectionality of collaborating with CLD parents of students in general, with additional attention to collaborating with CLD parents of students with extensive support needs. The focus of all collaboration efforts should be on equitable engagement of all parents and of all students, with conscious acknowledgement of the layered biases, dominant cultural norms, and "othering" experienced by many of these parents and students. The goal should be to create a school environment that celebrates all students, parents, and teachers as their full selves and celebrates their assets and exceptionalities.

Literature Review

The literature review examines the multifaceted aspects of collaboration between culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) families of students with extensive support needs and their school placement. Collaboration is a conceptual construct in which principles of shared respect and responsibility are applied to practice (Emmons & Zager, 2018). The following review of literature will cover legal precedents for special education law without a guide, the responsibility for collaboration, roadblocks to collaboration, and a framework for equitable collaboration through cultural brokering and an equitable collaboration lens.

The United States requires collaboration as a legal mandate and right of all people who qualify for special education services (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400, 2004). This mandate is a part of the IDEA, which also guarantees free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for all students who qualify for special education. These legal mandates protect the rights of not only the students but also ensure the access to collaboration between schools and parents and/or guardians. The problem of non-equitable collaboration between culturally and/or linguistically diverse parents of students with extensive support needs should be a targeted goal for all schools. There are various barriers to equitable collaboration between any family and the school Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team.

The equitable collaboration between families and schools is legally mandated but not explicitly explained to teachers or parents. The increased complication of nondominant, culturally and/or linguistically diverse families in addition to the complexity of extensive support needs of many students in special education, adds additional barriers to a successful, equitable and balanced collaboration. The available research does not show how to adequately address the multifaceted aspects of collaboration and how parents from a nondominant

community can feel that they are an integral part of the team, especially those parents of students with extensive support needs.

Research about collaboration between schools and CLD families for students with extensive support needs is not new. Many articles dating back to 1996 specifically target the parent and professional partnerships with an emphasis on what was then referred to as multicultural considerations, which, in this research, will be addressed -how to consider the nondominant or culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) parents (Sileo, et al., 1996). Olivo and colleagues (2010) created a framework that showed actual steps to collaborate with CLD parents. This study is thorough and goes through the history of Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) to IDEA and how to adequately prepare educators and researchers for the diverse reality of our schools. This literature review brings together the idea of family-centered services. It also covers how to support families in the intersection of CLD parents of students with extensive support needs through law abiding, equitable collaboration. Some parental cultural groups were not covered in this literature review, as the focus for this study centered on the students with extensive support needs. Another review (Buren, 2020) of 18 qualitative studies sought to summarize the experiences of nondominant communities in collaboration with their student's special education team. The researcher conducted a meta-analysis and found crossover issues across the 18 studies. The four core themes were "(a) power barriers, (b) language and communication barriers, (c) relationship barriers, and (d) collaboration barriers" (Buren, 2020, p. 273). The barriers listed show the need for improvement across power imbalances and language imbalances, as many CLD parents are bilingual, and many teachers only speak English. The relationship should be attained and maintained between parents, teachers, and schools; the most important barrier indicated in this study was collaboration

barriers. The limitations of this study were an imbalance for different groups with a reliance on data from Latino and Asian groups.

Many articles featured in this literature review had little data directly from CLD parents and even fewer specifically addressed CLD parents of students with extensive support needs. One meta-synthesis by Buren and others (2020) directly addressed nondominant communities and special education collaboration. The researchers identified issues with all participants completing the study to the end as over half of the participants dropped out of the study halfway through. Mortier and others (2021) studied Latinx families with students with extensive support needs. The intersectionality that Mortier and their fellow researchers have chosen to address highlights the inherent issues throughout education that CLD parents of students with extensive support needs can increase equitable access to this specific group but also improve collaboration for all parents. The limitations and future research section of this study highlights the issues and gap of knowledge that still exists because 15 of the twenty participants were "visible and potentially more acculturated members of the Latinx community who were engaged in special education activism" (Mortier et al., 2020, p. 14). This gap in knowledge remains for a broader view of CLD parents that may not be engaging in activism if they are not able to access the support systems. Many researchers also list barriers to collaboration without pinpointing solutions, which causes both the researcher and participants to feel as though there is not a way to improve the inequitable situation.

Legal Precedent Without a Guide

The preliminary law concerning legal protections and mandates of rights for children with special needs in schools is the EHA (Education for All Handicapped Children Act, 20, U.S.C. § 1400, 1975). This law assured for the first time in United States history a free and

appropriate public education (FAPE) for all students three to twenty-one years old who qualified for special education services-"In 1970, U.S. schools educated only one in five children with disabilities, and many states had laws excluding certain students, including children who were deaf, blind, emotionally disturbed, or had an intellectual disability" (US Department of Education, 2022). The law in the United States excluded 80 percent of children three to twenty-one years old from any education at all until 1970. This is part of the history of special education in the United States. There should be a precedent for collaboration as a legal mandate and right of all people who qualify for special education services (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400, 2004). Other laws also played a role for students; Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 provided and outlined further protection for families and students, which states that "no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance" (Civil Rights Act, title VI, 42 U.S.C. § 601, 1964). This nondiscriminatory law in 1964 ensured the equitable access to education under the law for all students in federally funded public schools.

By 1974, there was an additional law-the Equal Educational Opportunities Act-which states that "all children enrolled in public schools are entitled to equal educational opportunity without regard to race, color, sex, or national origin; and that the neighborhood is the appropriate basis for determining public school assignments" (Equal Educational Opportunities Act, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d, 1974). This provided an additional clarification that all students are entitled to the same educational opportunities and their school placement was based on their address, not their abilities.

These laws are now the basis for the IDEA, which combines the access to education as well as the mandated collaboration without discrimination based on race, color, sex, or national origin, to ensure and mandate the collaboration, and to provide translation and access to all "vital written material" (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400, 2004). Much of the research reviewed for this project supports the need for CLD families to be equitably collaborated with as legally mandated for any student with special needs (Cheatham & Lim-Mullins, 2018). The legal precedent exists, and the need exists, but there is no clear-cut method or roadmap to equitable collaboration for any or all CLD families, especially those with students with extensive support needs.

Responsibility for Collaboration

The required legal mandate for equitable collaboration without a dictated responsible party or definition of which roles are assigned to whom make this a difficult puzzle to solve. The responsibility of the successful collaboration falls to the schools and districts but most specifically to the teachers (Cheatham, 2011). Cheatham (2018) reiterated that the responsibility of the linguistic and cultural accommodations for CLD parents fall on the teacher (education specialist) as the professional. Research also shows that when the collaboration is successful, the achievement of students increases (Cheatham & Lim-Mullins, 2018). Cheatham and his team focused on parent-professional partnerships as the main determinant of effective inclusion of students with disabilities.

The education specialist is the case manager for the students with extensive support needs, so in the case of these students, it should be the teacher (education specialist) who holds the responsibility of collaborating with the CLD parents. In fact, "researchers have documented that student outcomes are improved when teachers are engaged in ongoing and positive

collaborative practices" (Dillon et al., 2021, p. 42). This study specifically looked at collaboration between the teachers and therapists; they studied a speech pathologist and adaptive Physical Education teacher working together to support the student. Dillon et al. point out another related aspect of collaboration needed not just between the parents and the teacher but within the interdisciplinary team that many students with extensive support needs have. For example, one student with extensive support needs can have all these therapists or specialists on their IEP team: education specialist, general education teacher, speech and language pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, counselor, vision specialist, orientation and mobility specialist, local education agency representative, district representative, and more. The ability to coordinate services, collaboration, and communication can be difficult for any teacher or parent and many times both parties feel overwhelmed.

Additionally, one 2022 study explored the perspectives of teachers and how much information the parents had access to and how to improve this by citing what information the district or teachers provide to parents (Farley et al., 2022)- "Results indicated that 67.6% of teachers perceived parents to be satisfied or very satisfied with the special education information received from schools. However, teachers had varied perspectives on how well parents understand special education, and the majority (56%) did not feel resources and support to help parents better understand special education exist" (Farley et al., 2022, p. 1). Clearly the teachers' perceived satisfaction by the parents could not be compared with data from the actual parents. However, this study shows that over half of the teachers with a high rate of perceived satisfaction did not understand special education and felt that resources are needed to better understand special education. This responsibility for collaboration with the parents specifically

for IEPs does fall upon the education specialist as the case manager and liaison between parents and the other specialists as well as the district.

Roadblocks for Collaboration

The studies found in this review of literature focused on the negatives and harsh realities of failures to create equitable collaboration. The following themes appeared across studies as roadblocks to collaboration: language interpretation issues; prejudices and misconceptions surrounding CLD students and families in society, in schools, and in meetings; and the importance of language and the stress placed on parents to know how to access all information and supports available for their students. In a 2011 study, Cheatham focused on preschool-aged students and the lack of skilled interpreters available (Cheatham, 2011). The study stated that the state and federal policy would need to change to ensure the increase of interpreter credentials and standards to support the CLD parents' access to the meetings. Another article by Emmonds and Zager discussed important aspects of collaboration such as "(a) adequate funding for personnel and resources, (b) commitment to team and students, (c) understanding and respecting cultures of other collaborators' disciplines and backgrounds, (d) communication among stakeholders, and (e) removing turf issues" (Emmons & Zager, 2018, p. 120). Through stating these key aspects of equitable collaboration, schools can reduce the barriers that hinder them. Parents must believe that they are safe just as the students must feel safe in a classroom. DeFur's study centers on the idea that "mutual trust and respect represent the foundation of collaborative partnerships. Yet, trust only develops when we can predict positive behavior from our partners, and when we are confident that we can depend on one another" (DeFur, 2012, p. 65). The centering of trust and respect as the pillars of collaboration is required for a true partnership to form.

Another roadblock can be the assumption that all CLD parents are the same or want the same communication. According to Chu (2014), "unstated assumptions about communication, communication barriers, and mismatched expectations," (p. 238) are the biggest barriers to collaboration, according to the Chinese parents of students with special needs. When parents participate in IEPs, that leads to increased student achievement. Cheatham and Lim-Mullins (2018) noted that parent involvement can be lowered based on past negative experiences with collaborations, embarrassment to ask for an interpreter, and a belief that they are recipients of educators' decisions. There are many roadblocks to successful implementation of the collaboration and there is not much research that explains the differences or difficulties that are added when the student has extensive support needs (Buren, Maggin, & Brown, 2020).

Olivos' study centers on the pitfalls in the collaboration process: misunderstandings, deficit views, difference in values, and the understanding of everyone's role. The authors discuss the historical marginalization and prejudices surrounding CLD students and families in society, schools, and in meetings. The article does mention that many CLD parents can defer to the professionals and at times were answering that they have high satisfaction with the services provided to them. The article mentioned the CLD families' perspective in research is limited by response rates, limited age range (many very young children), and not much range in racial or socioeconomic diversity. The researcher focused on obtaining more research from a narrow portion of the population (Olivos et al., 2010). The lack of studies that show the spectrum of students who are eligible for special education services three to twenty-two, creates a large gap in the research.

Cheatham (2018) offered a framework for teachers to use to avoid the barriers to collaboration. Cheatham cites the importance of language, positionality, and equitable and

inclusive discussion between the parent-professionals on the IEP team. Cheatham (2018) found that partnerships can suffer from parents feeling marginalized by the ways that educators use English, specifically through special education jargon, and that teachers often have low expectations and/or poor assumptions about parents who are immigrants and bilingual. Studies show that when parents participate in IEPs, their students' achievement increases. Teachers and IEP teams should reconceptualize bilingual participant language skills and how that creates a supportive dialogue that will lead to equitable inclusion in special education by English language learners. The participation of parents who are bilingual or multilingual should be celebrated, considered, and supported by the entire team.

Parents often must advocate for themselves and their children, which can create a contentious relationship between themselves and the school. One study stated, "parents who accessed hidden cultural capital still reported obstacles to both their participation (e.g., feeling disrespected or dismissed) and effective outcomes of participation (e.g., failing to secure a needed service or accommodation)" (Trainor, 2010, p. 259). Trainor's study looked at the regulated parent participation as an undue stress and burden on the parents and how they learn on their own or through other parents how to get what their child needs. A participant stated:

Listening to other parents or, starting to ask if other parents have, and they'll start naming services, and I'm like, wow, you do that? So, I'm thinking of all kinds of services that I would not have thought of. But unless you know about them, you do not know to ask. Or you just assume the teachers want to give your child the best things and the best opportunity (Trainor, 2010, p. 259).

This parent does place the onus on other parents to teach her or explain to her how to use the available resources to her and not depend on a teacher or professional to help her or her child.

A final roadblock to collaboration is teacher burnout. This is a problem across all teachers; however, studies have shown that Special Education teachers experience burnout at higher rates that lead to attrition and lower student achievement (Hester et al., 2020). Hester's study included 366 teachers and noted that approximately 50% of special education teachers leave the profession within the first five years. This level of burnout can only lessen the chances of equitable engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse parents of students with extensive support needs. In a study by Ruble and McGrew (2013) they found "inverse correlations between teacher emotional exhaustion and student IEP goal attainment and IEP quality. Further, they found emotional exhaustion accounted for 9.3% of the variance in IEP goal attainment" (Brunsting, et al., 2014, p. 697). These studies clearly show a negative correlation between teacher burnout and student achievement on goals and IEP quality.

Framework for Collaboration: Cultural Brokering

The collaboration frameworks found in research can be used to piece together an appropriate framework to use for CLD parents of students with extensive support needs. Rossetti and his colleagues stated that a cultural broker was "any advocate who had engaged in the purposeful act of connecting people of differing cultural backgrounds to improve collaboration" (Rossetti et al., 2017, p. 3). Sileo stated that parents should first be "considered mutual partners in educational decision-making processes" (Sileo, et al., 1996, p. 1). Once parents are seen as mutual partners in the process, they are given the due respect needed to start a collaboration. Recent studies (Rossetti et al., 2017; Mortier et al., 2020) mention cultural

brokers as a meaningful support for access to equitable collaboration between schools and specifically for Latinx families with students with extensive support needs. This study provides a meaningful solution that shows that "family-school partnerships can only grow within the context of authentic relationships with culturally humble professionals" (Mortier et al., 2020, p. 14). The use of cultural brokers can empower families and allow them to feel more comfortable with the interactions with someone who does understand their culture and experiences.

All teachers should be culturally humble professionals who facilitate equitable access to collaboration with parents of students with extensive support needs. The framework, unfortunately, may have to be edited and used as a guideline but change as the needs of the parents, families, and students change. An additional study worth noting focused on urban African American families with children with severe emotional or cognitive abilities and their perception of cultural sensitivity or lack thereof by the schools and professionals (Zionts et al., 2003). One parent in this study stated, "if all these components (culture, religion, child rearing, communication with students and parents, parent-professional collaboration, family decision making) were truly included in the education of teachers, administrators, and staff, our children would get the top-notch quality instruction that they need" (Zionts et al., 2003, p. 49). Another parent conversation led to a theme of including other parents or the use of cultural brokers to support parents by people who do understand their culture and can help them access the available services (Mortier et al., 2020). A parent participant in the Zionts et al. (2003) study stated, "Parents need to have a common bond. Parents who have experiences of a child with the same disability need to share strategies. Parents of children with disabilities need to come together and help each other out, have some sort of support group" (p. 49). The creation of

support groups within school communities may increase the positive and equitable outcomes of collaboration.

The support group idea was shared across other studies; in one example, the authors state "these cultural brokers may create safe spaces to help families 'decode' the dominant school culture, educate parents about improving their child's achievement, connect parents to institutional resources and knowledge, and advocate for changes to the institution" (Ishimaru et al., 2016, p. 852). The decoding can either allow parents to access the information or create a feeling of confusion, misunderstanding and helplessness. Perhaps the model of teacher-led collaboration does not allow for the appropriate support in these cases of parents in need of decoding support. Equitable collaboration can only be made when the collaboration focuses on the parent and student. The idea that all teachers are culturally humble professionals to all CLD parents does not seem like an easily attainable goal. There is, however, hope for collaboration for the students who need it the most, if further studies are conducted that ask the correct questions to the parents themselves to have their input on improving these collaborative relationships.

Equitable Collaboration Lens

As with any framework, cultural brokering can present its own issues and pitfalls. Ishimaru does warn against the simple use of cultural brokers as they can also continue a deficit view of parents. Ishimaru and others (2016) state that cultural brokers often follow the dominant cultural norms, while the use of

> an equitable collaboration lens suggests that nondominant parents and families can provide valuable forms of information and support to each other and that collective sharing of such assets can facilitate their participation and advocacy. Conventional parent engagement efforts often seek to increase individual parents' capacity to support their own children, an approach that assumes parents' only impact is on their own children. (p. 858)

The equitable collaboration lens again reiterates the importance of parents supporting other parents within their special education experiences and accessing services and decoding meetings and communication from the teachers and schools.

In the above study, many parents supported each other through less one-on-one parent-teacher conferences, so that meetings could include more than one parent with more authentic discussion. Ishimaru and others elaborated that "using an equitable collaboration lens suggests that cultural brokering can cultivate more reciprocal relationships and forms of support. Equitable collaboration posits that parents and families both possess and can build cultural and intellectual resources, and cultural practices and ways of knowing that can help instructional and institutional practices become more accessible, transparent, or responsive" (Ishimaru et al., 2016, p. 859). The importance of being able to create opportunities to learn from one another will empower both parents and teachers to gain perspective, knowledge and optimally increase the possibilities for the student in school and in their future as adults in society.

Conclusion

This literature review contributes to the field of special education by specifically addressing the group of students with extensive support needs and their nondominant CLD families. The existing literature does not distinguish additional considerations for the vast differences in levels of support required, nor the additional stress and hardship that the students and families face with their more complex needs. The literature that exists remains centered on all students with disabilities, with some consideration for CLD parents. The literature for the past ten years does not thoroughly and specifically address the additional needs, considerations, and complications for students with extensive support needs.

The purpose of this study is to understand the barriers to collaboration between culturally and linguistically diverse families and parents of students with extensive support needs in Special Education. A parent generated guideline for equitable collaboration for these specific marginalized groups is one intended result of this thesis project. The parent generated guidelines will need to be supportive to all parents and allow for diversity within the group of nondominant and CLD parents with students with extensive support needs.

The responsibility of equitable collaboration remains with teachers, schools, and specialists to improve the support to increase equitable and meaningful collaboration with parents and families for the benefit of students. The use of an equitable collaboration lens may provide a new way to support parents and students based on their own needs, not by making them understand and fit in the dominant cultural mold and expectations. The dominant message that CLD parents and their students with extensive support needs should assimilate, adapt, and change themselves should be challenged. This review of literature documented the historical context of special education regulations and mandates and the equity still needed when supporting students with extensive support needs and their CLD families.

Methods

The purpose of this study is to understand the perspectives of culturally and linguistically diverse parents who are navigating collaboration for their children with extensive support needs. The qualitative methods used included both surveys and individual interviews to hear directly from parents and teachers. The study included five parent participants, two of which continued to be interviewed. The study included eleven teacher participants who completed the survey. The surveys and interviews provided two sources of data collection for this qualitative study. The central questions of this research project, which were based on a gap in knowledge in existing research (Mortier et al., 2021), were: (1) How might educators foster equitable collaboration between schools and parents from nondominant and or culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) groups with students with extensive support needs? (2) What do non dominant/CLD parents of students with extensive support needs believe is the key to effective collaboration? (3) What do teachers of students with extensive support needs believe is key to effective collaboration? (4) How might teachers lead a team of service providers, schools, and school districts toward more equitable collaboration with non-dominant/CLD parents of students with extensive support needs? The gap in knowledge for these specific parents and these specific students with their additional considerations created the purpose for this research. This study seeks to better understand how to improve collaboration between schools and CLD parents of students with extensive support needs who receive special education services.

Description and Rationale for Research Approach

This research project follows the philosophical worldview of pragmatism through qualitative research. Creswell explains the four philosophical worldviews of post positivism,

constructivism, transformative, and pragmatism (Crewswell, 2018). Pragmatism "arises out of actions, situations, and consequences rather than antecedent conditions. There is concern with application-what works- and solutions to problems" (Creswell, 2018, p. 10). This research relies most on pragmatism as a worldview, which allows the participants in a study to use their own experiences to generate solutions that they deem meaningful to them based on their own lived experiences. The research attempts to create applicable solutions to problems to achieve improved equity in collaboration between culturally and linguistically diverse parents of children with extensive support needs and their schools. The collaboration can allow for equitable and meaningful participation in Individualized Education Plans for students who are eligible for special education services, as mandated by federal law (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400, 2004). The legal mandate does not explicitly define collaboration, does not show how to improve collaboration, or ensure equitable access to collaboration for the benefit of students with extensive support needs.

Pragmatism as a worldview does not enforce a method for research as opposed to other worldviews that dictate whether the study be qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods- "Individual researchers have a freedom of choice. In this way, researchers are free to choose the methods, techniques, and procedures of research that best meet their needs and purposes" (Creswell, 2018, p. 10). This freedom of methods would allow the research to be completed through qualitative methods of open-ended survey questions and follow-up individual interviews with willing participants. I resonated with Kinloch and San Pedro when they addressed participant engagement in interviews- "The idea that was emerging for you was not in isolation in just your mind; it was between us, emerging not necessarily by you speaking or me listening, but in this space between us where we were interacting and engaging an idea

together" (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014, p. 25). The engagement should not be one-sided, and this was not the goal in this study. One goal of this project was to create dialogic circles through qualitative research methods. The dialogic circles require two active participants at a minimum. The participants, in this case, are the researcher and the participant (either a parent or teacher); they created the circle by engaging together and through verbal and nonverbal communication. The dialogic circle was not formed in isolation, it was through engagement with the two participants in the interview that the circle was created.

The first data collection step was a survey and the follow up was voluntary for those participants who wanted to further engage with the researcher through an interview. The parents were the focus of the research, so they determined what aspects of their collaboration had been supportive or successful and those that had not been and how to improve. Teachers were also participants in this study and provided an additional perspective. Teachers did not encapsulate the entire team or all those service providers who are required to collaborate. However, the teachers often are the ones who facilitate the collaboration between the parents and the therapists and the school district. This project can contribute to social change through a humble quest for further equity in collaboration for CLD parents with students with extensive support needs.

Research Design

The researcher entered the field many years ago when first starting in special education at eighteen years old. For the next seventeen years, they have worked directly with students with extensive support needs and seven years ago, started to teach those students as an Education Specialist. For the past two years, they have been the principal at the school's secondary campus for students fifteen to twenty-two years old. They have worked with the

participants for at least two years directly as the teacher to their students and as the sole administrator who speaks Spanish, their native language. The school is a non-public school that serves students from kindergarten to Post Secondary age with students exiting at age twenty-two years old. The students are placed at the school if their needs are not met by their home district of eligibility, which is an IEP team decision. The demographics of the parent participants were: 30-52 years old; four of five parents were mothers, with one father participant; their primary language spoken for all participants was Spanish. The demographics of the teacher participants were: 24 to 76 years of age; three of the eleven teachers were male, and only one participant spoke Spanish; the rest were English only speakers. The participants were selected from the school the researcher worked at and all CLD parents at the school were asked to participate in the study.

This research used purposive sampling. Parents were surveyed to gain their perspective as previous research did not capture their continued participation in studies or they were not studied at all. The sample size was five parents and eleven teachers. Prior research cited lack of participation or participants who dropped out of the studies, specifically for CLD parents with students with extensive support needs. This research aimed to target those parents so that their voices and opinions were studied and highlighted. The participating CLD parents have students with extensive support needs who currently attend the non-public school or were recent graduates. The survey was sent to all the teachers and administrators who were previously teachers at the school with experience collaborating with culturally and linguistically diverse parents. The parent participants were adults who are Spanish speakers. The parents are from 30-50 years old, and half of the participants' children qualify for free and reduced lunch, but further descriptive information is not known. The researcher was also an employee at the school site

and conducted all interviews and surveys and provided materials and interviews in Spanish for parent participants. Those parents and teachers who expressed interest in being a part of the interview after completing the survey, were asked to meet on Zoom with the researcher.

Teacher participants at the school and parents of students with extensive support needs were recruited for participation in the study. Parents participating in this study do not speak English as their primary language. The purpose of recruiting teachers was to understand their perspective on collaboration. Administrators were included in the teacher participant group and asked to share their perspective from their years as a teacher.

At the school, the CLD parents of students with extensive support needs and teachers who have served or are serving culturally, and linguistically diverse parents were asked to participate in a survey. First, the survey was sent via Google Form; due to the closeness and ongoing communication with the participants, the researcher sent a text message and a text to their cell phone with a link to the survey for all participants. The participants' cell phone numbers were accessible as they are parents from the school site where the researcher worked. The research survey announced that interested volunteers contact the researcher via text or a call to arrange a secondary individual interview date.

Two methods were used to obtain informed consent. The statement of research was presented to the participants for the follow up interviews with parents and the informed consent forms were presented in Spanish for the parent participants. The informed consent and introduction letter were presented at the beginning of the survey for consent. For the follow up interviews with teachers, informed consent forms were signed for all teachers participating in the study. Oral consent for the interview was obtained after reviewing these documents and after answering all questions from participants.

The instruments for data collection were surveys that were collected and compared within the group of parent participants and teacher participants and then compared across the two groups. The interviews were recorded using a cell phone and then transcribed and translated. Google Forms was used as the survey tool for both parents and teachers. The interviews were conducted on Zoom. The data was collected and coded. The researcher transcribed all interviews and translated those conducted in Spanish to English.

The Google Form did not collect names or emails and all the data was collected and labeled by date and time they answered the survey. The data gathered from interviews was kept confidential. The data gathered was confidential rather than anonymous since the research took place within the researcher's presence. Only the sole researcher read transcripts and listened to audio recordings of interviews, and the data was stored in a secure location. Teachers and parents were only identified with pseudonyms. Names were never recorded in any written notes, or on surveys, to ensure confidentiality regarding all participant comments.

Data Analysis

Data was collected via two methods with two groups of participants; parents and teachers were recruited from one school site that serves students with extensive support needs. Initial qualitative data included a bilingual Spanish/English survey of CLD parents of students with extensive support needs. A second survey collected data about teachers with experience working with students with extensive support needs. The third data set consisted of interviews with the two parents who chose to continue the study with a follow-up interview.

The interviews were recorded on the researcher's cell phone that is password protected. Throughout the interview the researcher wrote down key words as analytic memos. Maxwell expresses the importance of memos to facilitate data analysis- "memos not only capture your

analytic thinking about your data, but also *facilitate* such thinking, stimulating analytic insights" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 105). Once the memos were completed, three of the qualitative analysis strategies used by Maxwell were also used: analytic memos, categorizing the codes, and connecting strategies to compile the codes into more broad themes. Finally, narrative summaries were created from the interviews. This helped to find the relationships and connections between each participant and their individual perspectives.

A list of expected codes for both the parent and the teacher surveys and interviews were reviewed; these expected codes were positive experiences, roadblocks, supports, frustration, and feelings of isolation from the parents. These were drawn from preliminary interviews with one parent who expressed both positive and negative experiences with collaboration regarding her child's education and time in the special education world. During the interviews, the researcher took analytic memos. After the interview, they immediately listened to the recording again to make sure that they recorded all the key points being said. This allowed for adding additional analytic memos and additional notes as part of open coding. The researcher read the transcribed interviews and translated Spanish to English to ensure the categories were ready for further coding and analysis across both groups. The researcher then added a list of unexpected codes they did not hypothesize would be included in results. Finally, the researcher reread the transcripts multiple times to ensure all the meaningful data was collected through more focused coding by concentrating and condensing the codes. Additionally, peer coding was used as a validity check to ensure that another peer did not notice any mistakes in the coding process completed up to that point.

The step of connecting the narrative summaries of each interview and how to relate them to each other was completed; this was done both between parents and across teachers and

parents. This allowed the researcher to see the inconsistencies and consistencies across the two groups and within the whole group of participants. The focus was the parents as the force behind the proposed guidelines to appropriate and equitable collaboration, but the teacher participants provided another important perspective. A data analysis matrix (Maxwell, 2013, Figure 5.1, p. 109) was used as a guide to create this project's matrix. The researcher used a convergent design as recommended by Maxwell (2013). In phase one, survey data was collected; interviews provided the secondary data. Then, results were merged. Finally, interpreted results were compared.

Validity

The researcher is a teacher and administrator at the school where all parents currently have students, or the students just recently graduated from the school. This influenced data collection because although the surveys were administered anonymously, the interviews were conducted on zoom and the participants know the researcher, who has a relationship with each of their students. The researcher currently acts as the translator and person who communicates directly to these parents for their teachers or for the administrative team. As such, the researcher recognizes bias   as a bilingual, nonnative Spanish speaker and teacher and acknowledges trying to increase and improve collaboration between the school and these parents. Due to the dual relationship that the researcher had with participants, they employed multiple strategies to decrease validity threats in the study. The researcher's positionality as a graduate student and an educated administrator at the school site was considered in the creation of both the survey and interview questions for all participants. The teacher participants were asked to participate in the study, but the researcher also was their acting supervisor or coworker for half of the teacher participants at the time of this study.

Respondent validation on data collected for the participants of the interviews via follow up calls to ensure they agreed with the interpretation and specifically the translations was conducted. This provided another opportunity for the participants to be heard and reconfirm or clarify their perspective. Once guidelines were completed, all participants were encouraged to confirm if they agreed with the outcome from the data collected across all participants.

The guidelines were written in an asset model; according to Tackas, it is important to note how positionality biases epistemology because this helps to build an asset model- "we can see speaking English as a second language as a deficit. Or we can focus on an ESL student's assets: she is bilingual, a facile language learner who has much to teach about bridging cultures" (Takacs, 2003, p. 28). The asset model of multiculturalism assisted in creating a guideline for collaboration.

As suggested by Maxwell (2013), the researcher used rich data with verbatim transcripts of the interviews. They took concrete notes on any nuanced behaviors by the participants who were interviewed. They did not rely solely on the numbers collected from the surveys that asked for a rating scale, as that would oversimplify the experiences to one single number. Finally, the use of experiential data (Maxwell, 2013) was used throughout this process as a validity check. The researcher has worked in Special Education for seventeen years with direct knowledge and witnessed the frustration with the lack of support for these specific parents and students with extensive support needs. This potential bias also created the impetus for the researcher's passion to complete an equitable guideline for parents, schools, and teachers to utilize to increase equity in collaboration.

Results

The research discussed in this chapter was collected through surveys and interviews of parents who all identify as multilingual Spanish and English speakers with students with extensive support needs. The participants' children have been eligible for special education services for 8-10 years with an average of nine years of eligibility. The study also surveyed eleven teachers with experiences of collaborating with culturally and linguistically diverse families to improve student outcomes, which was the goal for collaboration. The research was completed to answer the following questions: (1) How might educators foster equitable collaboration between schools and parents from nondominant and/or culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) groups with students with extensive support needs? (2) What do non dominant/CLD parents of students with extensive support needs believe is the key to effective collaboration? (3) What do teachers of students with extensive support needs believe is key to effective collaboration? (4) How might teachers lead a team of service providers, schools, and school districts toward more equitable collaboration with non-dominant/CLD parents of students with extensive support needs?

Through transcribing and coding the surveys of teachers and parents as well as analyzing parent interviews, several themes became apparent. This study demonstrates how collaboration between schools and culturally and linguistically diverse parents/families with students with extensive support needs is effective when that collaboration process is culturally responsive, respectful, and equitable. This type of collaboration requires building meaningful relationships and gaining mutual trust between school personnel and families. Equitable and culturally responsive collaboration should be more than just a legal mandate but a requirement for equitable access to special education services. The themes found in the data collected for

this project were: how collaboration is defined by parents and teachers; communication as a building block for collaboration; barriers to collaboration; and effective strategies for equitable collaboration between CLD parents of students with extensive support needs and schools.

Collaboration

The purpose of this study was to determine how to create an equitable collaboration between parents and schools to support students with extensive support needs. The participants in the study consisted of five parent participants, two of which participated in an interview after completing a survey and eleven teachers who completed the survey. All participants were asked to define collaboration in their own words. To highlight the importance of parents' voices, this study will present parents' input first, as an attempt to give them the due respect and importance of their experiences. The following responses were given in Spanish, so evidence is first presented in Spanish and then translated in English in parentheses.

Collaboration as Defined by Parents

The survey asked, "¿Qué significa colaboración para Ud.? (What does collaboration mean to you?)" and one parent, Carolina, stated "estar al pendiente para cualquier situación por si se necesita apoyo (be aware of any situation in case support is needed)." This participant also stated that teachers, parents, and assistants are the key participants in collaboration. The idea that the parents want to be informed of any need for support is a common theme amongst the parent contributors to this study. Another parent, Natalia, stated, "para mi significa contribuir, aportar, sugerir ideas o cosas a un grupo de personas (For me it means contributing, providing, suggesting ideas or things to a group of people)." Her response also showed a desire to work in a group of people who are willing to contribute for the betterment of their child. The final survey participant, Fernanda, highlighted a major step in the IEP (Individualized Education

Plan) process- "la colaboración: la comprensión y sus metas académicos terapias y conocimiento, habilidades de comportamiento (Collaboration: understanding of academic and therapeutic goals and knowledge, behavioral skills)." Fernanda mentioned the need to understand the basics of the students' yearly academic plan, which is different from students in other schools, who follow the same grade level-based academic standards. The students at the school where the parent participants' children attend have individualized education goals and it is important that these goals are created in collaboration with the parents in a way that they understand how to support the goals' achievement across the home and school environment.

The interview participants were given more time to explain what collaboration means to them in relation to their student's education. In Maria's interview, she stated, "Being in communication with the teachers, with the teachers, with the parents… when the child has a problem with a child, such as his behavior or things… now you do have to inform the parents so that the parents act." Maria brought up a meaningful aspect not previously considered, which is how the information shared can be used- "either medically to take to the doctor so that they have better stability in their mind. So that they are calmer at school as well as at home." Maria speaks about the importance of the creation of similar expectations, experiences, and methods of supporting their child at school and at home. The only participant who was a father, Jon, had much to say about how to collaborate effectively through mutual communication:

Mutual communication. In growth, education, development of the person. Both academically and personally. That is why I say that it is the fundamental part of the values of the main values of education. In this case, even from us, as parents, to be able to understand them, above all in their needs, when in this case, we are of two languages and of Hispanic race, linguistically speaking a different language, for us, in this case, my perspective, it is makes it

sometimes very difficult and difficult to understand. Why do we have another, very different upbringing with very different values, from what he has obtained here with other people, but what he has to obtain according to the rules and laws of this country in which education has to be different. The truth is principal values are very different here from there, in this case, regardless of his inefficiency or his disability, well it is a confusion. Sometimes abysmal, right? In this case, well, he speaks, hears, listens, communicates, writes, reads, perhaps sometimes he does not understand everything, he does not discern everything, but he is a little different from other people who do have much more difficult situations. In this case, the relationship between school and parents. Well, it is much more important still, right, because it is the key to the mutual education of children. And from a father. For me, it's that.

Jon, this parent participant, provided detailed information about not only the differences in core values between two cultures but also the recognition of "abysmal" deficits that are seen in his son, coupled with his desire to find how to best support his child. This father noted the difference between the two cultures and the different values that are taught in the education systems, comparing dominant cultures in Mexico and the United States, in his case. This provides insight to the deep and authentic understanding of one father and his acknowledgement of assimilation required of his son, based on a different culture and language and on his different and distinct abilities as a child with special needs. As he stated, the relationship between school and parents is the key to the mutual education of children.

Defining Roles of Collaboration

The survey asked parents and teachers to delineate the most important participants in the collaboration process which aims to support them and the children. There were similarities between the two participant groups in that parents/caregivers were listed as the most important

group by every participant. Please see the below table for the participants' answers to "¿Quiénes son los participantes más importantes para la mejor colaboración? (Who are the most important participants in collaboration?)."

Table 1
Participant Responses: Most Important Participants Required for Collaboration

	Parents	Students	Teachers	Therapists
Teacher Surveys	11/11	6/11	9/11	5/11
Parent Surveys	5/5	0/5	5/5	5/5
Totals	16/16	6/16	14/16	10/16

Every participant listed parents as the most important role in collaboration; the second most important role chosen by 87.5% of participants were teachers, followed by therapists, who were listed as key collaborators by all parents and by less than half of the teachers. Students were listed as important collaborators by more than half of the teachers and not mentioned at all by parent participants. An interesting data point noted by the researcher- three out of five students whose parents participated in the study do not attend their own IEP meetings. Once students turn 16, they are required to be invited to the IEP meeting, but many do not attend.

Collaboration as Defined by Teachers

The survey also asked for a numeral designation for satisfaction with collaboration between teachers and parents; the average answer across the teacher participants was 7.54 out of 10 (with 1 being the worst and 10 being perfect). These results show a much harsher criticism than the parents' average of 9.5 out of 10 on the same scale. Teachers' answers may indicate that they lack confidence in their ability to collaborate effectively with these students and their families.

The teachers were also asked to define collaboration; these excerpts include many references to teamwork, communication, time management, community building, and mutual respect and consistency. One teacher participant, James, defined collaboration as "listening to parent challenges and helping create plans so the students can be successful in both their home and school environment." Sharon said it was important to make…

> sure, they know they are a part of the team and their input matters. Staying in communication with them and keeping them updated on activities during the school day. Making time to talk with them and scheduling behavior meetings or check-ins when necessary.

Finding mutual goals between the parents and the school is also key to creating meaningful annual goals for the student. One teacher, Amy, explains this aspect of collaboration as follows:

> I like knowing in detail what my parents feel their child's needs are and how we can work together to create a program that will help their child work toward meeting goal areas / needs we all feel are appropriate. Collaboration with parents means communicating, implementing, and adhering to the same plan/goals as best we can at school and at home. And always respecting their wants/needs for their child (within reason!)

The conclusion of her comment highlights that the goals must be within reason or reasonably achievable. Every teacher knows the need for SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time Bound) on this campus. Therefore, it is no surprise that teachers include establishing reasonable goals as part of the collaboration process.

Another way teachers defined collaboration included listening closely to parents and families and creating community with shared vision and responsibilities. Nico shared,

> collaboration with parents means listening. Collaboration is meeting people where they are. building bridges, creating community. A common language and understanding. shared vision, shared responsibility, and shared resources. Collaboration is working together toward a common goal. Collaboration is teaming up to help scaffold so students can transfer skills across partners and settings.

This skill transfer emerged as a theme within the outcome goals of meaningful and equitable collaboration for these families. The collaboration creates a more meaningful connection between what is happening for the students at school and at home to support student progress and help them reach their full potential. As teacher participants involved in this study noted, the skill transfer should and must work in a cycle between teachers, parents, students, and therapists to create a collaborative community and increase the learning opportunities and success for the student.

Equitable Communication

Participants in this study described a primary aspect of effective collaboration as equitable communication with all parents about their children, regardless of the child's level of needs and the parents' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Many teachers cited listening as a key first step to creating a relationship of respect as a foundation for communication and then collaboration. One teacher, Nico, stated, "Collaboration with parents means listening." It is important for teachers to listen directly to parents and students to understand their lives and experiences, which teachers may not otherwise have access to as a teacher. The combined wealth of knowledge between the professionally trained teachers and the parents with many years of direct experience with their own children can help with collaboration. According to teacher participants involved in this study, when schools and parents communicate together effectively and with respect to the parent's cultural and linguistic background, the students' success increases and the relationship between schools and families improves future collaboration. The parents rely on the school to hear about their child's day because students do not necessarily come home and tell them how it went. In the parent interview of Jon, for

example, he mentioned that although his child could verbally communicate, he rarely explained what happened to him on a hard day.

The shared goal of student success can unite parents and teachers together but also can create stress for teachers to communicate negative situations, failures on the part of the school, or issues with other students. It is clear from parent interviews that the parents want and should receive information about their child's day. One parent, Jon, suggested using Spanish- speaking assistants at the school to write short and meaningful summaries of their child's day if the teacher does not speak Spanish. This may point to the need for schools to consider using translation applications; Google Translate, for example, can work well to communicate quickly and efficiently. Unfortunately, issues can arise with translation applications; however, if there is a dialogue, miscommunications can be solved. According to one Spanish-speaking teacher, Maxine, effective communication includes not only sharing language, but understanding cultural backgrounds as well:

> I speak Spanish, so those families and I can communicate a little better than other teachers, however, I do have to recognize that I do not share the same cultural background as they do, nor do they all share the same cultural backgrounds so there is no one size fits all. I also really remember the first time one parent called me "seño". I remember thinking that she thought I was a man. I looked into it. In Guatemala, female teachers were not addressed as Señora or Señorita, but Seño.

The goal for both teachers and parents are to engage and communicate in a way that fosters improvement and success in their students. In the parent survey, Fernanda mentioned she wants the teachers to "help educate the parents on how to work with the students to use the same methods and supports at home." Daily and proactive communication can and does create a more equitable and meaningful collaboration between parents and teachers for the benefit of their children/students. One teacher, Rosie, mentioned a delicate balance:

Open communication early on and checking in briefly on small things/one at a time, rather than waiting for things to build and risk items getting lost in translation. Communicating about both strengths and areas of need for the child, to have both positive and serious conversations.

The balance between positive and negative communication is up to the teacher to maintain; this balance in communication is related to fostering positive relationships with parents. Parent's views and beliefs around collaboration should be examined by teachers and school administrators because their goals for and about collaboration should drive the style and type of collaboration.

Barriers to Collaboration

Barriers to equitable and effective collaboration between CLD parents of students with extensive support needs were identified by all participants involved in this study. For the parent participants, their primary language is not English; therefore, the survey and interview questions were presented in their native language (Spanish) and responses were recorded in Spanish. One parent requested the survey be read to her and she dictated her answers to the researcher. This accommodation allowed her to access the survey without the impingement of technology.

Communication Barrier: Understanding Special Education Processes and Jargon

One communication barrier identified across the data was related to nuances to the special education processes that in the first years as a parent there is a learning curve for any parent. The special education process requires understanding jargon and legal terms. This pressure to understand these nuances is felt by parents at least once a year, during annual, IEP meetings. Many parents shared that they find this language and process confusing during conferences and phone calls with the researcher. In teacher surveys, three participants identified this barrier and followed up with a strategy- holding pre-IEP meetings to create a more comfortable environment for asking questions. One parent involved in this study explained that

they were confused about what an initial meeting was going to cover because it was marked as an IEP and an ITP (Individualized Transition Plan); an ITP is a legal requirement for any student who receives special education services and will be turning 16 years old by the end of the IEP year. The parent had a pre-IEP meeting and got to ask questions because her assumption was that her student was going to be "kicked out" of the school and returned to his school of residence. The pre-IEP meeting provided a safe space to have an educational conversation about this new aspect of her child's IEP moving forward up until the age of exit at 22 years old.

Prior Negative Experiences

Another barrier identified in this study's data was that parents have had prior negative experiences in other schools that lead to mistrust, fear, and confusion about what to expect or ask for from their school. Teachers involved in this study shared that they felt pressure to "reset" parent expectations. This desire to address and change parent feelings about the combative nature of the process of advocating for their child. In a parent interview with Jon, he stated that teachers could address this barrier of negative past experiences by "creating a new feeling and experience and giving them the benefit of the doubt with acknowledgement of previous traumatic experiences." The succinct statement showed his acknowledgement of his own trauma and request to give the benefit of the doubt on both sides to create the desired outcome of student success and equitable collaboration. Maria, the other parent interviewed, mentioned that due to a negative experience that was not dealt with appropriately, her family moved to change her child's school placement. This large decision was made to support her son, which would not have been necessary with improved communication and collaboration between the school and parent.

Limited Parent Voice: Views of Parents

Another barrier to collaboration cited in interviews and surveys with parents were

attitudes and beliefs toward parents. Two parents cited they did not feel heard, nor did they feel

understood by the school communities their child attended as a younger student. Two parent

participants mentioned that there was a reduction of services for their students, without any

prior communication from the school. This complete change in program led them to feel a lack

of trust in the system but also reduced trust for the teachers and school personnel. Parents may

sometimes appear to teachers as not being consistently involved in the student's education, but

one teacher participant noted barriers— "language barriers, socioeconomic status-less phone

access/computer access etc.., availability of parents to communicate within school hours, follow

through from parent or teacher"—which can lead to misinterpreting reduced engagement as lack

of prioritization: Joey, a teacher, mentioned that some parents are:

> more defensive about things and not happy with their child's educational care. I
> think the collaboration starts to dwindle when facing these types of
> parents/families. I do my best on 'reading the room' when I'm interacting with a
> parent. I understand naturally that there are many different personalities and
> priorities parents have when discussed their child's education.

Oftentimes, this nuanced engagement viewed through the lens of an interpreter can lead

to real confusion and misunderstandings. Jon, during the parent interview, recognized the

challenges he has noticed in teachers: "there is a great pressure. Yes, I know…this (teaching)

cannot be paid for with words or by anyone." Teachers as well as parents experience this great

pressure. Many teachers surveyed for this project have felt overwhelmed by the style,

frequency, or timing of communication from parents. All the teachers surveyed felt they were

overwhelmed by communication (including texts or phone calls) outside of their working hours.

The requirements of the job are not always clear, which can lead to boundaries being crossed

which results in negative feelings for both parents and teachers.

Communication Balance: Lack of Trust or Effort

Another barrier to effective collaboration identified by participants was imbalanced communication and lack of trust and effort. The balance required for sharing both positive and negative communication created complications for all the teachers surveyed. Many teachers shared their desire to avoid problems and failures to collaborate well. Teachers stated that avoiding these problems requires opening communication with parents early in the year and checking in briefly on small things/one at a time, rather than waiting for things to build and risk items getting lost in translation. When teachers communicate strengths and areas of need for the child means they can have both a positive and a more serious conversation. A first-year teacher, Joey, cites an honest aspect of barriers to collaboration:

> One aspect can be flat out effort... more specifically, if there is a language barrier, then teachers might be hesitant with collaboration/communication and navigating waters that might not be as comfortable as they're used to. In addition to effort, lack of trust would have to be up there toward the top of barriers preventing great collaboration.

He states this to take responsibility and acknowledge that having more than one student with extensive support needs can bring with its parents with extensive support needs, which adds to the typical stress experienced by both teachers and parents.

According to teacher participants, barriers to communication may include a lack of balanced conversation (including both positive and serious topics), reduced effort and comfort for teachers to navigate language differences, and a lack of trust among both parties. Overall, teachers agreed that the shared experience of working with or having a student with extensive support needs can either unite or create further tension and it is up to the participants in collaboration to create a meaningful and equitable relationship.

Strategies for Equitable Collaboration

The theme of building community and comfort for families in joining a school community can be complicated regardless of the level of needs of the students. Data from this project highlighted several strategies for improving collaboration among parents and teachers. Many parents cited successes in collaboration with schools describing events at school and in the community. Jon's son went to a pizza parlor, a non-school event that was facilitated by the school, at six years old and that was a lasting experience for him and his son. Jon was asked if he felt confidence in the school and if he believed his son could feel that confidence. Jon said,

> I think that the human relationship between teachers, students, and parents is very important to me. Human relationships are very important. The concept of stopping a bit of how I will tell you, not pity, but, as they say, another word. Consideration, true consideration for the children.

His son had never attended a party before, and this moment occurred through true community building for that classroom. He appreciated the openness that the teacher had allowed for a real relationship to form between the teacher and the parents. He also said he felt his son was considered as an individual and that this helped foster collaboration and mutual respect.

The second recommendation across all surveys and interviews was to write daily notes to have at least one form of communication per day. Maria, a parent, said this helps the parents:

> They can know the day he had so that the parents notice at times that the students arrive. This happened. That is, you must defend yourself against this note. There you will realize that the parents are doing their job as a parent.

This allows for the parents to hear what is happening at school and be able to have a conversation with their child and have a chance as she so succinctly stated to do their job as a parent, to educate their child based on the report that was sent home.

Providing Choice and Accommodations for Collaboration

Another strategy identified by participants was creating opportunities to create community with other parents and families. While the pizza parlor story at the beginning of this section illustrates an example of collaboration through a school event, many parents in this study have agreed to participate when they were offered to join a Spanish speaking parents' group to share and create a space to be in community together, which was hosted at the school. This offer was thought up by the two interview subjects and then presented to the other participants at the completion of the surveys. This strategy creates a space for the Spanish-speaking parents to relate to each other and share experiences and supports (including Matrix's parent services, Regional Center Support, IHSS- In Home Support Services, conservatorship lawyers, ABA- Applied Behavior Analysis therapy); see chapter five for further discussion. A teacher, Nico, offers choice and accommodations for parents to participate in collaborative activities; for example, - "offering ways to connect and contribute that are accessible, like a potluck, or a group discussion rather than a lecture format for training. Offer timing that works for working families, and translation for language barriers." These considerations are key to creating equitable collaboration. According to participants in this study, the timing, interpretations and offering support for childcare during these meetings would allow for more engagement and a feeling of genuine support.

Teacher Training to Promote Equitable Collaboration

Training could also be an important step in the creation of more equitable access to collaboration. One lofty goal mentioned by a teacher, James, was for teachers to "learn additional languages; increase cultural awareness and understanding; stay open to communication and alternative ways of thinking." One possibility is identifying funding

opportunities for teachers to learn to speak the languages families speak or attend training for culturally responsive teaching to better serve their school community.

Creating Community through Events

In the interview with Jon (parent participant), he also mentioned the need for a community event for the whole school as a great opportunity to meet other families. The school does have school wide events at this time, and he finds the other Spanish speaking families or has been introduced by members of the school. Jon explained:

> Your initiative brings us closer to the school, to the event. This makes us feel good. I love it. I do not know, when we are going, we do feel like a family in the events you have. He (his son) feels a beautiful atmosphere there and he likes it.

The other additional benefit to creating a community event like this is the sharing of knowledge between parents instead of just the teachers being responsible for sharing all information. Maria mentioned that she completed the entire conservatorship process without a lawyer—which could cost $5,000-10,000 and could be essential for adults with extensive support needs to receive the correct care and support. It may be more meaningful for other parents to hear directly from her experiences rather than from a teacher or administrator about the conservatorship process. This may point to opportunities to hold community events focused on strategies for navigating the sometimes-complicated experience of navigating special education jargon and laws. In this study, participants suggested creating a helpful and resource-rich community, which many parents feel is lacking as a parent of a student with special needs.

Conclusion

The themes discussed in this chapter covered a working definition of collaboration in the words of parents and teachers of students with extensive support needs. This definition is key to creating a mutual understanding of what collaboration strives to accomplish and how parents and teachers can agree or distinguish their goals of collaboration. The main shared goal of

collaboration was to have increased student achievement both at home, in the classroom, and in their lives. The second theme covered was communication as the key to collaboration and the roadblocks to proper and timely communication in an equitable way across all families. The third theme covered barriers to collaboration because both parents and teachers recognized an inherent challenge to collaboration across language barriers, cultural differences, and overcoming past negative experiences with schools and teachers for parents. The final theme covered effective strategies for equitable collaboration between CLD parents of students with extensive support needs and schools. This final theme showed, in participants' own words, real examples and opportunities for improvement as shared by the parents and teachers with experience in this intersection of students with extensive support needs and their CLD parents as collaborators. The next chapter will continue the discussion by highlighting parent voices from the study in tandem with teachers' input to provide suggestions for equitable collaboration.

The four research questions posed at the beginning of this chapter were all discussed, but not fully answered through this study. The first question was: how might educators foster equitable collaboration between schools and parents from nondominant and/or culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) groups with students with extensive support needs? This study attempted to share the distinct voices of parent participants as a first-person perspective on their own experiences, good and bad, with collaboration. Through this research, it has been clear that engaging in open and humble communication with parents directly is the best way to foster equitable communication because each parent is different. The second question posed by this research was: what do non dominant/CLD parents of students with extensive support needs believe is the key to effective collaboration? Most of the parents surveyed noted that teachers and therapists are the two key collaborators necessary to achieve effective collaboration. The

participants are clear and again, the extensive rules and outlines for collaboration would have to be adjusted for each parent and family. The third question was, what do teachers of students with extensive support needs believe is key to effective collaboration? The teacher participants with this study stated that parents and teachers are the key participants to collaboration. Again, the participants stated that effort, open mutual communication, and the shared goal for increased student achievement should drive collaboration. The final research question was: how might teachers lead a team of service providers, schools, and school districts toward more equitable collaboration with non-dominant/CLD parents of students with extensive support needs? This question is not simple, which previous researchers had also stated. This research journeyed to examine a group of parent and teacher participants in a dialogue with the researcher about their own experiences with collaboration. This provided an engagement of parents and teachers on the topic of collaboration, their successes, and challenges and how to better support the parents and ideally increase student achievement through collaboration. These parent participants are both CLD parents who fall within a smaller subgroup of parents of students with extensive support needs, which further complicates engagement across cultural and linguistic barriers.

Discussion

The previously discussed results created a base of new data to synthesize the perspective of parents first as well as teachers; both groups are attempting equitable and meaningful collaboration. The cultural and linguistically diverse (CLD) parent participants highlight the intersection of their own cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds as well as the added complexity of the extensive support needs of their children. The research completed in this thesis had some similarities with existing theoretical frameworks discussed in the literature review. The first shared concept between the literature review and this research was to define collaboration to increase student success and achievement. The second similarity found was the recognition and definition of roadblocks to collaboration both in this study and previous studies. The final similarity found was the importance of parents as the often-forgotten main player in collaboration and how the creation and use of cultural brokers or parent-to-parent training can help share the responsibility of collaborating to not just one family and one teacher.

The definition of collaboration varied throughout all the studies with some common themes such as communication as the key factor to collaboration across nondominant cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Emmons and Zager (2018) defined collaboration as a "conceptual construct in which principles of shared respect and responsibility are applied to practice" (p. 120). In this research, Jon, a parent participant, said that collaboration requires, "a high level of communication, through mutual respect and a desire to educate both parents to the teachers and teachers to the parents." The shared respect and responsibility should be applied to the practice of equitable collaboration. The similarities from the studies in existing research and findings from this study both showed that mutual engagement is a key to creating a collaborative relationship between parents and schools. The first similarity between previous research and the

research completed for this study is that communication is key to collaboration. In previous studies, Cheatham and Lim-Mullins stated that communication is key to equitable collaboration, and the onus of the communication falls mainly to the teachers. This was a shared result, as parents and teachers stated that parents (followed by teachers) are the two most important participants in successful collaboration. This acknowledgement is important and worthy of study because it directly correlates to improved student outcomes- "Researchers have documented that student outcomes are improved when teachers are engaged in ongoing and positive collaborative practices" (Dillon et al., 2021, p. 42). Cheatham (2018) reiterated that the responsibility of the linguistic and cultural accommodations for CLD parents fall on the teacher (education specialist) as the professional. This designation was not discussed by participants in this study; however, it remained an unspoken factor as to why parents revered their children's teachers and their opinions.

There were a few studies that covered teacher perspectives in addition to parent perspectives, another similarity among the reviewed literature and this project's findings. A 2022 study explored the perspectives of teachers regarding how much information the parents had access to and how to improve this access by citing what information the district or themselves as teachers provide to parents (Farley et al., 2022).

> Results indicated that 67.6% of teachers perceived parents to be satisfied or very satisfied with the special education information received from schools. However, teachers had varied perspectives on how well parents understand special education, and the majority (56%) did not feel resources and supports to help parents better understand special education exist (p. 1).

In Farley's study, the teachers' perceived satisfaction from the parents could not be compared with data from the actual parents. However, for this thesis project, there was a mismatch between teachers and parents (i.e., parents' rating of the level of collaboration and the teachers' rating of the level of satisfaction with collaboration). Parents in this research project

rated the level of satisfaction as a 9.5 average (with a range of 8-10 out of 10) while the

teachers' average was 7.5 (with a range of 6-9 out of 10), 10 being a "perfect collaboration."

The communication required for a successful collaboration was noted by all parents across this

research. The research discussed in the literature review showed that clearly defining how to

rate collaboration is an important step to getting meaningful data. It is worth noting the

differences in satisfaction rating for collaboration between the teachers and parents in this study

and how that demonstrates the complications among stakeholders about their honest rating of

their experiences and satisfaction.

      All the studies reviewed for this project listed various roadblocks or barriers to

collaboration. The inclusion of roadblocks can be interpreted as a negative perspective;

however, in terms of this research project, these roadblocks are shared from the perspectives of

the parents and teachers directly. Roadblocks exist with any collaboration and are only further

complicated by the extensive support needs and parents who are CLD. Buren (2020) clarified

the main barriers to collaboration as:

> (a) lack of interpreters or translated documents, (b) issues with cultural
> misinterpretations, (c) problems advocating for appropriate services, (d)
> confusion concerning special education jargon and the purpose of the IEP, and
> (e) challenges with the quantity and quality of information received at home (p.
> 259).

      The research distinguishes the differences between collaboration: making decisions

about the services, minutes and goals for the IEP, family engagement: supporting the classroom

on field trips and volunteering for the classroom. The study showed that:

collaboration and family engagement with schools is associated with a host of positive outcomes for students with disabilities such as increased student academic achievement and cognitive development, increased fulfillment of IEP goals and benchmarks, improved attendance, and a decrease in at-risk behaviors and dropout rates (Buren 2020, p. 260).

The need for collaboration is there and documented through this study. The guidelines are not fully applicable in each situation and not simple for teachers to follow.

The above study delineated many barriers that were not discussed in the same verbiage in this thesis project. For example, one parent participant alluded to power barriers when she discussed the use of jargon in meetings. This language barrier does not allow equitable access, regardless of interpretation or translation provided by the school. Amy, a teacher interviewed for this project, noted the importance of "always respecting their wants/needs for their child (within reason!)." This designation of "reasonable or not" shows the barriers of differing opinions on what is reasonable. What may be reasonable for one parent may not be agreeable to their teacher. These differences of opinion should be handled with an intention to gain mutual understanding through respect. Successful implementation of the collaborative process can shine light on the barriers that CLD parents and families with a child with extensive support needs face in our society.

The final similarity to be discussed was the parent-centered approach to collaboration instead of the antiquated teacher-led collaboration as covered in Ishimaru's study in 2016. The literature review and this thesis project also aimed to focus on the families and how to best support them to increase student achievement and success. That is the goal this research sought to achieve as well as the focus of many of the previous studies from the review of literature.

The importance of human relationships was discussed by various participants involved in this project and one parent directly spoke to this theme. Jon, in his parent interview, said,

> I think that the human relationship between teachers, students and parents is very important to me. Human relationships are very important. The concept of stopping a bit of how I will tell you, not pity, but, as they say, another word. Consideration, true consideration for the children.

This father mentions human relationships as the key element to collaborating and the same level of consideration is due to the student as is to the parents and the family. Recent studies (Mortier et al., 2020; Rossetti et al., 2017) mention cultural brokers as a meaningful support for access to equitable collaboration between schools and specifically for Latinx families with students with extensive support needs. In Mortier's study, he cites that "family-school partnerships can only grow within the context of authentic relationships with culturally humble professionals" (Mortier et al., 2020, p. 14). These culturally humble professionals should be the goal but there must be instructional and institutional changes to support this goal.

Mortier and other researchers whose work was reviewed for this study, created a call to action for all educators to begin the journey and a task to be culturally humble professionals. Mortier's study also mentions the use of parent groups to form a space for parents to discuss their experiences together. This thesis project did not achieve the goal of joining together all parents due to scheduling and difficulties to bring them all together; however, this remains a goal for the researcher. A parent participant in the Zionts et al. (2003) study stated,

> Parents need to have a common bond. Parents who have experiences of a child with the same disability need to share strategies. Parents of children with disabilities need to come together and help each other out, have some sort of support group" (p. 49).

This idea of a support group was brought to all the participants involved in this project and all of them stated they would be willing to join. This would also address the barrier that all the responsibility of collaboration should and often solely falls to the teacher.

In this study, the parents were asked to define in their own words "good and bad" collaboration they experienced as parents. Their overall approval rating of collaboration was

high; however, each of them had an experience with poor collaboration from schools. One of the aims of this study is to set up a community building experience for this specific subgroup in one school, which will hopefully help create a more meaningful and truly equitable collaboration. There was further cross over between this study and the previous studies that cover trust and respect as a foundational aspect of collaboration. DeFur (2012) centers on the idea that "mutual trust and respect represent the foundation of collaborative partnerships. Yet, trust only develops when we can predict positive behavior from our partners, and when we are confident that we can depend on one another" (p. 65). Trust and respect gained can create the required confidence and mutually beneficial relationship between parents and teachers.

There were also differences to note across this project's findings, which are unique to what has already been studied by other researchers. The research focused on either culturally and linguistically diverse parents or parents of students with extensive support needs. There were limited studies that covered the intersection of both of those groups. This study aimed to allow participants to have an unfiltered voice and share their experiences as an underrepresented portion of the population of parents with students with special needs. Cheatham (2018) and his team focused on parent-professional partnerships as the main determinant of effective inclusion of students with disabilities. However, this study aimed to flip the parent-professional partnership model due to the inherent disparities that arise when only two parties are engaging across cultural and linguistic hurdles. There should be more of a community-based approach to engage more than one family within the school to share their knowledge and experiences.

It is important to set up a parent support group to create real and meaningful relationships to share the responsibilities that parents and teachers often face in collaborating to

achieve improved student outcomes. In a 2010 study, Trainor covered the power of parental

support and education by other parents,

> they'll start naming services, and I'm like, wow, you do that? So, I'm thinking of
> all kinds of services that I would not have thought of. But unless you know about
> them, you do not know what to ask. Or you just assume the teachers want to give
> your child the best things and the best opportunity" (Trainor, 2010, p. 259).

This research aimed to show that assumptions can cause difficulties, feelings of resentment, or

build feelings of mistrust between parents and teachers. It is impossible for any one teacher to

learn and know all the services and opportunities out there for every family or child.

Through the creation of a parent group, there may be a favorable and inherently

equitable outcome from someone with a similar situation. None of the participants in this

project used words like "cultural broker" as defined by Rossetti and his colleagues, as "any

advocate who had engaged in the purposeful act of connecting people of differing cultural

backgrounds to improve collaboration" (Rossetti et al., 2017, p. 3). In the survey, the parents

seemed interested at the end of the surveys and interviews in creating a support group. It is

inferred by the researcher that the parents are seeking cultural brokers in the other parents.

The final difference to be noted in this research is that there was a genuine recognition

by parents that the teachers have a difficult job. None of the studies reviewed included a parent-

dictated acknowledgment of the difficulty of collaboration that teachers face. This

acknowledgement showed a real human relationship between parents and teachers with a desire

to understand the inherent difficulties felt by all parties involved. The parents in the study were

able to recognize the struggles of teachers and be humble participants in the collaboration, just

as other studies have asked of the teachers.

Gap in Knowledge

This research aims to address the gap in knowledge and the lack of inclusion of parents'

perspectives as CLD parents with students with extensive support needs. The gap of knowledge

was narrowed; however, it was not closed. This research provides a brief and succinct picture of

collaboration through the eyes of parents and teachers in one school. Their insights provide

meaningful data that can be added to the existing literature. There are intricacies that come up

when researching intersectionality seen in the study participants.

This study brought new insights through examples of poor and great collaboration

experiences as shared by both teachers and parents. They each brought their own rating of their

experience of collaboration and the data shows that parents are very satisfied with the

collaboration they had experienced, and teachers had a lower rating of their own experiences.

This should provide some comfort to teachers but also motivate them to improve. The lower

rating by teachers also speaks to a lack of training and confidence in their skills as collaborators.

Further opportunities to meet and engage in teacher team training with the feedback from the

parents would benefit all involved in collaboration. This would also allow teachers to hear the

successes from the parents directly and could increase their confidence to collaborate.

Implications for Literature

In terms of practical implications for this study, it is the desire of the researcher to have

created a space that recognizes the differences of the families that make up all classrooms. It

should inspire teachers to understand the realities of their parents, to be able to ask questions, to

learn the preferred communication style, to engage in conversation about the families' goals and

appreciate the values they want at the center of the children's education. Teaching can be a

daunting endeavor and this research reiterates that teachers should see the parents as co-

educators that they can learn from. The desired outcome for future literature is to include further inquiry directly from the parent voices and creating more authentic, reasonable guidelines for effective collaboration.

Policy Reform Recommendations

The researcher proposes policies for schools, districts, and states that require more education and training opportunities that are culturally and linguistically appropriate for teachers. Teacher preparation programs should include policies that require learning about the legal mandates set by state and federal laws. Finally, school policies include language that incentivizes parents to join parent groups to facilitate meaningful participation that represents the cultural and linguistic makeup of the school and the community. The parent groups often do not match the CLD of the school community and it is up to the school to increase the attendance of those underserved groups. The data collected suggests that schools create opportunities for parent meetings with adequate interpreters to create space for parents to share knowledge, tips, and resources and be in community with other parents in similar situations.

On a state level, there are currently grants available to support families. One grant is titled "Family Empowerment Centers on Disability Grant" and it offers funding for programs made for parents with a requirement to employ parents as part of the organization. There is already one Family Empowerment Center (FEC) in local counties, but it is encouraging to see that the state of California wants to expand the existing FECs in the state. Another state and district wide recommendation would be to increase training specific for teachers who have parents who are CLD and have students with extensive support needs. The current programs in the state of California are based mainly on general education with some training and professional learning opportunities offered for Special Education teachers.

The study also provides district recommendations, there should be some coordination from the districts with their schools to ensure there are opportunities for these families to be a part of the greater community and within their own communities. Parent advocacy groups would benefit if districts lent their facilities and shared the parent-led activities with the parents at their schools. The local district hired interpreters and they are skilled professionals who can be key to ensuring direct and instantaneous interpretation in meetings. The skilled interpreters behave as cultural brokers, with advanced knowledge of the IEP process and services available. There should also be more outreach for training and employing parents to become interpreters for the school district. This distinct skill set, and personal experience would allow these interpreters to support other parents in similar situations.

For the school at the center of this study, there should be more equitable engagement with all parents and improved collaboration to achieve the legal mandates required. The findings from this study can contribute to social change in this school by asking the nondominant CLD parents for their input directly. The data collected will be shared and incorporated into the training of new teachers and veteran teachers who are supporting CLD parents at the school site. These families are on the edges of their own communities because of the high level of needs of their students. The idea for this school is to create a safe space and community for parents in a shared experience. Families with students with extensive support needs experience high levels of isolation and stress. These children often struggle to adhere to the rules of their culture and community and the families are often in the middle of this complicated experience. This study aims to be a start to further engage with this part of the school and community in general. These parents know what they want and do not want, and it is up to the schools and more specifically the teachers to gain access to that information.

Limitations of the Study

The study does have its limitations which could not be avoided in the limited time to complete this survey and a relatively small sample size of parents and teachers. Though the researcher reached out to all the parents who fit the category or CLD, they did not all respond. For future research it is recommended to remove barriers like limited time or the technological complication of working on a survey on a phone or computer. The teachers surveyed were seven women and 4 men; ten out of eleven were Caucasian and one teacher participant was Korean. The parents surveyed and interviewed were all from Mexican descent. The parents who participated are active participants in school activities. They also have a relationship with the researcher as a Spanish speaking teacher and administrator. The sample size was small and that was a limitation. Given more time, the researcher would have offered a meeting with all the parent participants and any other parents to discuss and create the guidelines to collaborations from their point of view.

The perspectives that the researcher missed were many; one school site was researched, which limited the number of participants. The survey was translated into Haitian Creole for one parent, but they did not participate. The social groups of teachers included teachers in their first year and administrators who had thirty years of experience. One out of the eleven teachers were non-white, and four of the eleven were men. This lack of diversity in the teaching staff can also alienate some parents to feel "othered" or different from most of the school community. The parent participants' children all have verbal language skills that are higher in comparison to the school population. Further studies should include parents of students with limited verbal skills and even more extensive support needs.

The researcher acknowledges the limitations due to the bias that the researcher intrinsically brought because of their upbringing, privilege, and education. The bias varies in the study because empathy was felt by the researcher for the teachers going through struggles with effective and equitable collaboration. The researcher was also an administrator engaging with teachers, some of which are under her supervision. In terms of the relationship between the researcher and the parents, all the parents know the researcher well and have had instances of collaboration, which may have led the parents to rate collaboration in a positive light. Also, the researcher felt as a Spanish speaking teacher and administrator that the supports provided can be improved upon, specifically for the Spanish-speaking parents. An unconscious bias of the researcher was to present positive data to ensure that both parents and teachers felt respected and avoid them feeling exploited or misinterpreted.

Future Research

New studies should continue to investigate and engage directly with parents across all CLD backgrounds to determine guidelines and support for them to achieve equitable collaboration and increase student achievement. Spanish-speaking parents are not the only CLD group that intersects with students with extensive support needs. There are other students from other cultures and other linguistic backgrounds that were not addressed in this research project. There is a need to cover each group and begin to acknowledge the differences and nuances of their own experiences as parents. There should be further research into other cultural differences that affect collaboration and communication between teachers and families. New directions for research should include the distinction between parents just entering special education with little knowledge versus those parents with more experience. This distinction is important because the participants' children from this study had received special education services for 8-20 years. The

years of experience for these parents provided a wealth of knowledge from their learning experiences. However, it would be interesting to speak with parents across the spectrum of just starting out in special education and those exiting special education services. They had on average eight years of experience and had more confidence even participating in the study. A longitudinal study that implements guidelines and follows the parents over years would give more insight to the validity of the guidelines.

The researcher's positionality is an educator who often sets the primary goal of collaboration to increase student achievement. Equitable collaboration between parents and schools is often an underestimated aspect to improving their achievement. Through research, the data shed light on the intersection between parents who are CLD and have students with extensive support needs as an understudied portion of the research available. The themes are interconnected because the research that existed did not specifically target the participant group of CLD parents with students with extensive support needs. This area lacked an equitable engagement in the research because it is a nondominant group within a nondominant group. The federal laws clearly state the legal mandates of collaboration. Regardless, it is not highlighted, explained, or taught sufficiently in the process of becoming a credentialed teacher in the state of California. The goal to increase student achievement often isolates the student by themself without real considerations for them as a part of their family and their community. This is a key step to increasing student achievement when equitable collaboration occurs between the parents and the teachers.

The intellectual purpose of this thesis was to allow the readers access to the parents' and teachers' perspectives on collaboration, to show the barriers, and create some guidelines and strategies for equitable collaboration. Maxwell stated, "practical goals are focused on

accomplishing something - meeting some need, changing some situation, or achieving some objective" (Maxwell, p. 21). The practical purpose of the study was to create a starting point with guidelines for future equitable engagement with a population at the school level in the researcher's current school site. "Intellectual (or professional) goals, in contrast, are focused on understanding something - gaining insight into what is going on and why this is happening, or answering some question that previous research has not adequately addressed" (Maxwell, p. 21). The intellectual goal of this study was to bring greater understanding to the reality of parents who are both CLD and have students with extensive support needs and those teachers who collaborate with them.

Conclusion

The single most important finding from this study was that both parents and teachers had a desire to collaborate, noted a mutual acknowledgement of the difficulties, and shared a goal for increased student achievement. The hope of this study is that it inspires educators and schools to become more knowledgeable on how to equitably collaborate with all their parents. The original rationale and research questions for this research were: (1) How might educators foster equitable collaboration between schools and parents from nondominant and/or culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) groups with students with extensive support needs? (2) What do non dominant/CLD parents of students with extensive support needs believe is the key to effective collaboration? (3) What do teachers of students with extensive support needs believe is key to effective collaboration? (4) How might teachers lead a team of service providers, schools, and school districts toward more equitable collaboration with non-dominant/CLD parents of students with extensive support needs? These four questions were not fully answered by this research, however, there were attempts to engage in a dialogue with parents and teachers who have experienced both "good and bad" collaboration. All participants, both parents and teachers, have engaged in communication, collaboration and hoped to increase student achievement, success, and independence. It is impossible to have a formulaic answer to any of these broad research questions posed in this research. However, through the direct involvement of parents and teachers, those most important to collaboration according to all participants, this research begins to open the authentic input of the participants in collaboration.

The experts exist in this quest for improved collaboration- they are the parents and teachers who are doing the work. It is now further research that should continue to engage in conversation with these important participants. Parents and teachers, through vulnerability and

honesty, can mutually benefit from the knowledge base of parents and teachers and vice versa.
Hopefully, the readers begin to engage in their own reflections on engagement with people and
collaborations in their own lives. Collaboration can be a successful and equitable engagement
with acknowledgment of each person's own experiences, their cultural background, and their
linguistic skills. This kind of collaboration can improve educators' ability to access much
needed information from parents. The shared responsibility of educating one child should be
mutually carried by not just the parents, not just the teachers, not just the therapists, but by a
supportive community.

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Appendix A

IRB Acceptance Letter

**DOMINICAN
UNIVERSITY
of CALIFORNIA**

Nov 28, 2022

Isabel Yates

50 Acacia Ave.

San Rafael, CA 94901

Dear Isabel,

On behalf of the Dominican University of California Institutional Review Board for the

Protection of Human Participants, I am pleased to approve your proposal entitled *Improving*

collaboration for *culturally and linguistically diverse parents of students with extensive*

support needs (IRBPHP Initial IRB Application # [11066]).

In your final report or paper please indicate that your project was approved by the

IRBPHP and indicate the identification number.

I wish you well in your very interesting research effort.

Sincerely,

Michaela George, Ph.D.

Chair, IRBPHP
Cc: Katie Lewis

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Participants

Office of Academic Affairs 50 Acacia Avenue, San Rafael, California 95901-2298

415-257-1310

www.dominican.edu

Appendix B

Survey and Interview Questions

Bilingual Survey Questions for Parents

Dominican University of California

Preguntas de encuesta para maestros y padres

1. ¿Qué significa colaboración para Ud.? What does collaboration mean to you?

2. ¿En qué forma podemos como maestra/o mejorar la colaboración? How can the teacher improve on collaboration?

3. ¿Quiénes son los participantes más importantes para la mejor colaboración? Who are the most important participants in collaboration?

4. ¿Califica el nivel de satisfacción de la colaboración que ha sentido entre escuelas y familias para su estudiante con servicios de educación especial (1 malo a 10 perfecto?/Rate the level of satisfaction of the collaboration you have felt between schools and families for your student with special education services (1 worst to 10 perfect)?

5. Explique la mejor instancia de colaboración para la educación de su hijo/a. Explain the best instance of collaboration for your child's education.

6. Explique la peor instancia de colaboración para la educación de su hijo/a. Explain the worst instance of collaboration for your child's education.

7. ¿Cuáles son las barreras para una buena colaboración? What are the barriers to good collaboration?

Survey Questions for Teachers

Dominican University of California

1. What does collaboration mean to you?

2. How can you improve your collaboration?

3. Who are the most important participants in collaboration?

4. Rate the level of satisfaction of the collaboration you have felt between schools and families for your students (1 worst to 10 perfect)?

5. Explain the best instance of collaboration for your student's education.

6. Explain the worst instance of collaboration for your child's education.

7. What are the barriers to good collaboration?

   Interview Questions for Parents

Interview Questions for Parents and Teachers

Dominican University of California

1. What does collaboration mean to you? ¿Qué significa para ti la colaboración?

2. What are the main barriers to collaboration? ¿Cuáles son las principales barreras para la colaboración?

3. How can we improve and create equitable collaboration? ¿Cómo podemos mejorar y crear una colaboración equitativa?