

## Augustana College

### EDUC/SPED 110 Foundations in American Education

Concepts addressed:

#### FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Parent involvement is a critical factor of effective schooling. A child's education should be considered a shared responsibility of the school, family and community. Simply put, when parents are involved in their child's education, student achievement improves. Schools with strong parental involvement have higher student achievement than those that lack strong parental involvement. This general idea has implications in special education situations.

When IDEA was passed in 1997, an important part of the law's reauthorization was the emphasis on parental and student participation. IDEA specifies a process of shared decision making whereby educators, parents, and students collaborate in deciding the student's education plan. Parental expectations are an important aspect of the student's IEP. The 1997 reauthorization put parents' rights and responsibilities in the forefront as a necessary part of appropriate and individualized educational programming. Schools must provide an opportunity for active parental participation in decisions about the education of their children.

The involvement of parents in the IEP process has potential to:

- Increase the teacher's understanding of the child's environment,
- Add to parents' knowledge of the child's educational setting
- Improve communication between parents and the school,
- Increase the school's understanding of the child, and
- Increase the likelihood that mutually agreed upon educational goals will be attained.

The following suggestions will maximize the benefits of parental involvement in the IEP process:

- Correspondence with parents should be in their native language; an interpreter may facilitate more effective communication.
- Solicit information from parents regarding their preferences and needs regarding the conference, including a convenient time and place.
- School staff and parents can together decide if the student should attend the conference.
- Be sure the family is aware that they may invite an advocate to the meeting such as a clergy member, friend, counselor, university faculty, legal advisor, or nurse/doctor, to assist them in asking questions, understanding programming and placement options, or identifying family-specific issues.
- Parents must be formally notified in writing about the purpose of the meeting, the time and location, and participants.