

Topic: **Build child, family, and community relationships that promote child development and learning.**

Khetani, M. A., Cohn, E. S., Orsmond, G. I., Law, M. C., & Coster, W. J. (2013). Parent perspectives of participation in home and community activities when receiving Part C early intervention services. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 32*, 234-245. doi: 10.1177/0271121411418004

Context

High quality Part C services for young children with disabilities involve the child's participation in meaningful activities in the natural setting of family and community life. It is important for Part C practitioners to understand the activities families identify as important for children's participation and how families promote participation.

Purpose of the Article

The purpose of this article was to report on parents' perceptions of their child's participation in home and community activities to enhance developmental outcomes. The researchers were interested in the ways that families rearranged their daily lives to accommodate their child with a disability.

Participants

The researchers interviewed 16 families of children with disabilities receiving Part C services in areas across the state of Massachusetts; Milwaukee, WI; and, Portland, OR. Five of the families were from immigrant backgrounds.

Methods

Researchers used qualitative methodology with a purposeful sampling strategy to obtain variation according to the child's age, eligibility, geographic region, and caregiver. The lead investigator telephoned each of the parents using a semi-structured interview protocol designed to gather information on the child's participation at home and in the community. Each participant received a \$20.00 gift card.

Findings

In response to research question 1: What are parents' expectations of their young child's participation in everyday activities? Parents reported that their children participated in home activities several times a day or several times a week. Participation in home activities varied according to whether the activity was done to sustain a household chore (nondiscretionary) or for enjoyment and well being (discretionary). Participation in community activities happened weekly or several times a month but depended on whether parents were able to access the activity (e.g., winter weather limited access to the outdoors).

In response to research question 2: What types of child, family, and environmental factors do parents identify as supporting or challenging participation in everyday activities? Parents reported assessing their child's mood and readiness to engage in daily activities as a key factor in making decisions about activities. Parents used specific resources to support their child's participation in home or community settings. For example, some of the immigrant families used the internet to communicate weekly with their extended families through Skype. Families reported taking their child to the international grocery store to shop for weekly meals and accessing information about cultural and religious events in their community.

Parents also described using respite care for date night opportunities to maintain an identity apart from being a parent. They reported being mindful of planning for excursions with their child by having the right supplies and supports

and timing the activity carefully. For example, a parent took her son for a haircut at a time when the shop was less busy, kept him occupied with a video game, gave him time to get acquainted with the haircutting tools, and fed him his favorite snacks.

Conclusion

Parents in this study reported remarkable ways to help their children participate in home and community activities. They identified a variety of strategies, resources, and supports to promote their child's participation. Because of the unique nature of the participation revealed by the parents in this qualitative study, the authors recommended the need for developing new quantitative research measures that would be more sensitive to investigating infant and toddler's participation in home and community activities.

It was also suggested that parents of infants and toddlers with disabilities were not different from other parents in terms of what activities they want to do, but they may need to develop specific strategies to respond to barriers related to their child's disability. The early interventionists can play an important role in eliciting information from parents on ideas for participation in everyday activities and provide suggestions for individualizing strategies and interventions to promote participation.

About *Research-to-Practice Briefs*

Research-to-Practice Briefs provide summaries of key studies that inform practice related to early childhood special education. The series is designed specifically to support community college faculty who prepare candidates to work with children with special needs in the early childhood setting.

About the ACCEPT Project

The ACCEPT (Advancing Community College Efforts in Paraprofessional Training) Project is a federally-funded cooperative agreement between the U. S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte College of Education. The focus of this effort is the inclusion of special education content in the coursework and experiences provided within the associate degree program in early childhood education at targeted state-supported community colleges in North Carolina.

Contact the ACCEPT Project

p: 704-687-8859

f: 704-687-3493

e: info@acceptproject.org

w: www.acceptproject.org

This Brief was prepared by Vivian Correa.