

**Title:** Perceptions and Needs of Chinese-American  
Parents of Children with Special Needs at the  
Elementary School Level

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# **Perceptions and Needs of Chinese-American parents of Children with Special Needs at the Elementary School Level**

## **Abstract**

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The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142), currently enacted as The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA'97) requires parents to be active participants in their child's educational career, such as collaborating with school personnel on deciding educational placement for their child; giving consent before any type of assessment is conducted; and being regularly informed of their disabled child's progress toward the annual goals that were stated in their Individual Education Plan (IEP). Meaningful interaction concerning special education is expected between schools and families, including families who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

As the number of culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities continues to grow, educators are obligated to learn to work with these students and their families. Working collaboratively with culturally and linguistically diverse families, however, continues to be a challenge for educators. Extensive research, focused on African-American, Hispanic, and Native-American families, was done and showed that there was a discrepancy of the perspectives on parental involvement between educators and parents of children with disabilities.

Asian-American continues to be one of the fastest growing minority groups in the United States population and the second largest culturally and linguistically diverse group receiving special education services in the United States. Very little research, however, has been done to reveal the perceptions and needs of Chinese-American parents of children with special needs. The purpose of this future qualitative study, therefore, is to (a) investigate the knowledge of Chinese-American parents with special-needs children about their parental rights and (b) identify these parents' experiences and needs while working with educators.

An interview containing open- and close-ended questions will be developed by the researcher. Participants will be selected from two urban school districts, which enroll the most Chinese-American children with special needs. All interviews will be tape-recorded and transcribed for data analysis.

The hypothesis of this study is that many Chinese-American parents of children with special needs are not satisfied with special education programs and often unaware of their parental rights and services being provided. This finding is expected because there is considerable agreement among the literature that many culturally and linguistically diverse families continued to have difficulty working with school personnel collaboratively and interpreting information given to them.

The findings of this study have several implications for schools and parents: (1) provide workshops to educate culturally and linguistically diverse parents on their rights play on their disabled children's educational career; (2) have parent advocates to facilitate communication between school and culturally and linguistically diverse families; and (3) hire more minority professionals to work in special education professions.