Applying Maslow's Hierarchy to the Parent/Teacher Relationship

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PURPOSE OF THIS SESSION

- Develop a better understanding of *Maslow’s Hierarchy* as it applies to the parent/teacher relationship

- To learn and exchange *strategies* for fostering positive, working relationships with parents of children with disabilities
SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS SESSION

- **Legal:**
  - Parental involvement in the IEP process is required by law (IDEA, 2004)

- **Educational:**
  - Research shows that students whose parents are *involved* in their educational process achieve higher academically than their peers.

- **Practical:**
  - No one knows a child better than their own parent(s). Their input, support, and partnership is essential.

- **Personal/Professional:**
  - Teachers and schools play a powerful role in the life trajectories of students with disabilities and children from poverty
PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

- Introduction
- SES and Disability
- Maslow’s Hierarchy
- The IEP Meeting
- General Strategies
- Conclusion
Define your role/priorities as a special educator:
Define your role/priorities as a parent:
Parents

Special Educators

Or?

Parents

Special Educators
“Poverty . . . may be a greater hardship than having a child with a disability”  
(Thurston & Navarrette, 2003, p. 45).
Poverty and low SES are empirically linked with disability

**Study 1** (Blair & Scott, 2002):
- Sample: 159,129 children in the state of Florida
- Method: linked birth records with school record data
- Findings:
  - “30% of LD placements among boys and 39% of LD placements among girls were attributable to what can be considered low SES markers” (Blair & Scott, 2002, p. 19).

**Study 2** (Thurston & Navarrette, 2003):
- Sample: 263 low income mothers from 4 states (Kansas, Tennessee, Texas, Florida)
- Method: Descriptive statistics and group comparisons (Chi square)
- Findings:
  - 40% of mothers reported having a child with a disability
  - 2x as many mothers who did not complete 8th grade had a child with a disability
IMPACT OF POVERTY ON STUDENTS

- Poor attendance & participation
- Increased frequency of relocations
- Poor brain development
- Illiteracy & low achievement
- Learners unready to learn
- Inadequate parental support
- Demand on exceptional education services

**IMPACT ON FAMILIES**

- **Family Impact**
  - Class system – “Haves” and “Have-nots”
  - The disparity between America’s rich and poor is the largest since 1928

- **Effects**
  - Family Stress & Dysfunction
  - Substance Abuse
  - Gang Activity
  - Homelessness
    - Approximately 1 out of every 50 children in America are homeless...about 1.5 million in all.
CHARACTERISTICS OF PARENTS FROM LOW SES BACKGROUNDS

- Focused on coping and survival
- Little formal education
- Low self-esteem/self-confidence
- Uncomfortable around teachers
- Materially and emotionally stressed

“The IEP process places demands on parents beyond what is often expected in other types of family-school partnerships”

~Newman, 2005, p. 7-4
Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs

- **Physiological**: breathing, food, water, sex, sleep, homeostasis, excretion
- **Safety**: security of body, employment, resources, morality, the family, health, property
- **Love/belonging**: friendship, family, sexual intimacy
- **Esteem**: self-esteem, confidence, achievement, respect of others, respect by others
- **Self-actualization**: morality, creativity, spontaneity, problem solving, lack of prejudice, acceptance of facts
“A theory of Human Motivation”

Grounded in psychology, includes elements of motivation

Hierarchy begins with the most basic, fundamental needs; ends with self-actualization

Basic level needs must be met before there can be a focus on higher level needs are focused

Has been applied to:
- Business
- Marketing
- Counseling
- Psychology
Free and reduced breakfast & lunch
Attention to proper lighting, heating, ergonomics, etc.
School nurse on staff
Focus on school culture and classroom community
School counseling for social/emotional challenges
Student centered classrooms
Gifted programming
A thorough and systematic review of the literature reveals that Maslow’s Hierarchy has not yet been specifically applied to parents.
“Can I put food on the table tonight?”

“Will there be enough at the end of the month to pay the electric bill?”
SAFETY

- Economic/financial safety
- Personal security
- Social

“Will this job offer health insurance?”

“Am I safe in this shelter?”

“Will this neighborhood be safer than where we came from?”
“Am I dressed right?”

“Will they see my point of view”?

“Why do I come when they have decided everything already?”

“I don’t remember the meaning of the acronyms being used by everyone in this meeting... I feel like they are speaking another language”
“Will they value my opinion?”

“Do they think I am a bad parent?”
“Am I a partner in my child’s educational process?”

“Did I help solve some problems?”
"Parents often view the IEP meeting as an opportunity for educators to brief them on the failures of their child."

(Fish, 2006, p. 57)
Many parents feel guilty, intimidated, disenfranchised, alienated, and embarrassed.

Educators dominate the decision making process.

Recipients of information rather than collaborators.

Perceive their input is often not welcomed, respected, or valued.

Describe their experience at the meeting as traumatic, confusing, and complicated.

Reluctant to ask questions or reveal their lack of understanding of the process.

Ill equipped; at a disadvantage because they don’t know the terminology.

Desire to be treated as equal partners in the process.

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Practice reframing: “Reframing provides a way for teachers to build a new perspective and vocabulary around the child and family. . . . Most negative behaviors can be viewed from a positive perspective” (p. 208)

- State the behavior in observable terms, rather than labeling the type of behavior (e.g., “he threw a chair at a peer” rather than “he is violent and dangerous”)

- Talk to the parents about the IEP meeting (the purpose, welcome them to bring information)

- Make parents aware of any potential conflicts ahead of time

- Ask parents if they have any concerns they would like you to address in the meeting

- Provide parents with clearly labeled DRAFT reports that will be discussed at the meeting

- Make nametags if it is a large group or there are people who the parents may not know
- Seat the parents next to the person taking notes and share the notes with the parents
- Begin the meeting with each person in attendance making a statement about the student’s strengths and abilities.
- Address participants respectfully and professionally.
- Solicit parent input about goals for the future (discuss what the student can do and what you want the student to be able to do).

“Remember that IEP team decisions have a profound effect on the student and family.”

STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS WITH PARENTS

For:
- teachers
- schools
- administrators
- teacher educators
## KNOW YOUR STUDENTS’ PARENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subgroups of Parents</th>
<th>Ideas for Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two-Career Parents</td>
<td>Put things in print. These parents will read and keep informed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved Parents</td>
<td>These parents are at school. The issue may be over involvement. Sometimes boundaries are necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Working and uninvolved Parents</td>
<td>This occurs at both end of economic spectrum. Phone banks where parents call for updates. Home contact is powerful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surrogate Parents</td>
<td>These are grandparents, foster parents, etc. Often need emotional support (e.g., assign mentor who touches base with them monthly).</td>
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</tbody>
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### HIDDEN RULES OF ECONOMIC CLASS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possessions</th>
<th>Poverty</th>
<th>Middle Class</th>
<th>Wealth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>People</td>
<td>Things</td>
<td>“One of a Kind” objects, legacies, pedigrees</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>Is for entertainment, sense of humor is highly valued</td>
<td>Is for acquisition and stability. Achievement is highly valued</td>
<td>Is for connections, financial, political, social connections highly valued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>Clothing valued for individual style and expression of personality.</td>
<td>Clothing valued for its quality and acceptance into the norms of middle class. Label important.</td>
<td>Clothing valued for its artistic sense and expression. Designer important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Present most important. Decision made for moment based on feelings or survival.</td>
<td>Future most important. Decision made against future ramifications.</td>
<td>Traditions and past history most important. Decision made partially on basis of tradition decorum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Valued and revered as abstract but not as reality. Education is about facts.</td>
<td>Crucial for climbing success ladder and making money.</td>
<td>Necessary tradition for making and maintaining connections.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STRATEGIES: ON THE PERSONAL LEVEL

- Make a “good phone call home” the first week of school. **Note only positives!**
- Ask parents their preferred mode of communication (phone, email, agenda, conference, etc.)
- Schedule meetings according to their schedules
- Compliment their parenting skills
- Ask for their input and suggestions
- Ask them what works at home
- Use language that reinforces you are a partnership/team in the educational process of their child
- Prepare parents for taking an active role in the IEP meeting
- Be sensitive to cultural diverse values
STRATEGIES: PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

- Know questions/techniques to facilitate conferences
- Stay away from judgments; use data
- Identify vague qualifiers
  - “It’s better”.....better than what?
- Identify fuzzy verbs
  - “always”
- Identify the emotion in a statement
- Identify the hidden rules or beliefs
STRATEGIES: SCHOOL LEVEL

- Ensure translators are available
- Assist with transportation and child-care for parents with young children
- Educate families about special education law
- Offer programs for fathers and extended families
- Provide life skills and life management workshops
- Offer computer classes
- Targeted outreach to parents of children with disabilities
  - Support groups
  - Forums for sharing and receiving information and support
  - Connect parents to services and programs in the local community
STRATEGIES: ADMINISTRATIVE

- Release time
- Special recognition
- Compensatory funding
- Scheduling accommodations
- Moral support

- From:
STRATEGIES/IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER TRAINING

- Teach strategies to improve parent involvement
- Explore difficult social and cultural issues
- Field experiences in schools with critical needs
- Field experiences in schools with cultural differences
- Provide Relevant and Enriching Professional Development
- Student reflections that examine the impact of their differences from others
- Examine the impact of poverty on learning & development
- Use culturally relevant curriculum
- Develop students of culture and difference
ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES?
RESOURCES

RESOURCES

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