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## Applying Maslow's Hierarchy to the Parent/Teacher Relationship

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# **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



# SPECIAL EDUCATORS

- Define your role/priorities as a special educator:

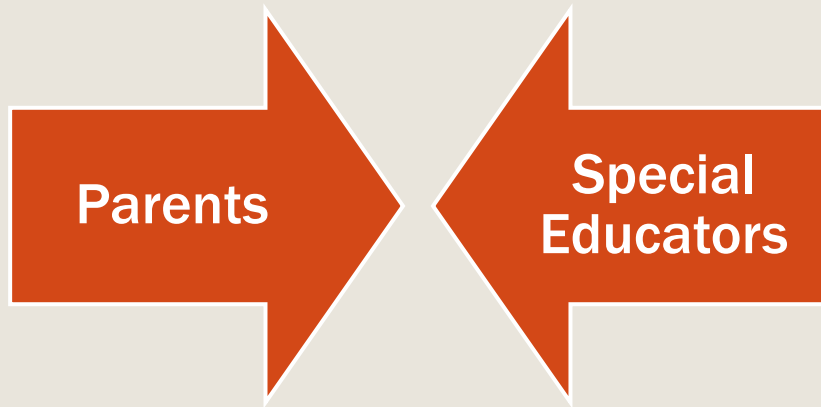


# PARENTS

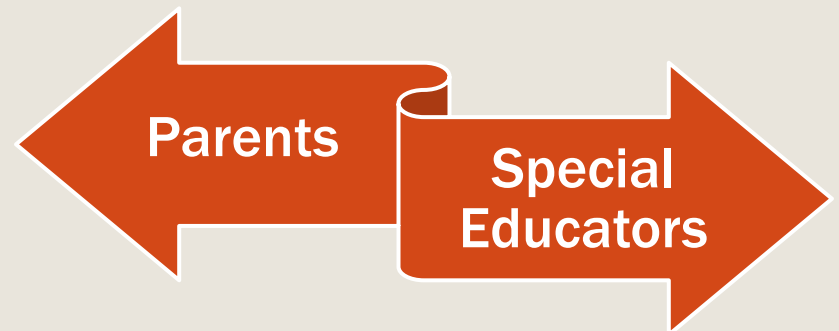
- Define your role/priorities as a parent:



# ROLES



*Or?*





# CONSIDER...

***“Poverty . . . may be a greater hardship than having a child with a disability”***

*(Thurston & Navarrette, 2003, p. 45).*

# POVERTY AND DISABILITY

- **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 s as many mothers who did not complete 8<sup>th</sup> 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



Wishon, P. (2009, November). When the economy falters: Poverty, culture, and education [PowerPointslides]. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Virginia Association of Colleges of Teacher Education and Association of Teacher Educators of Virginia, Sweet Briar, VA

# 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

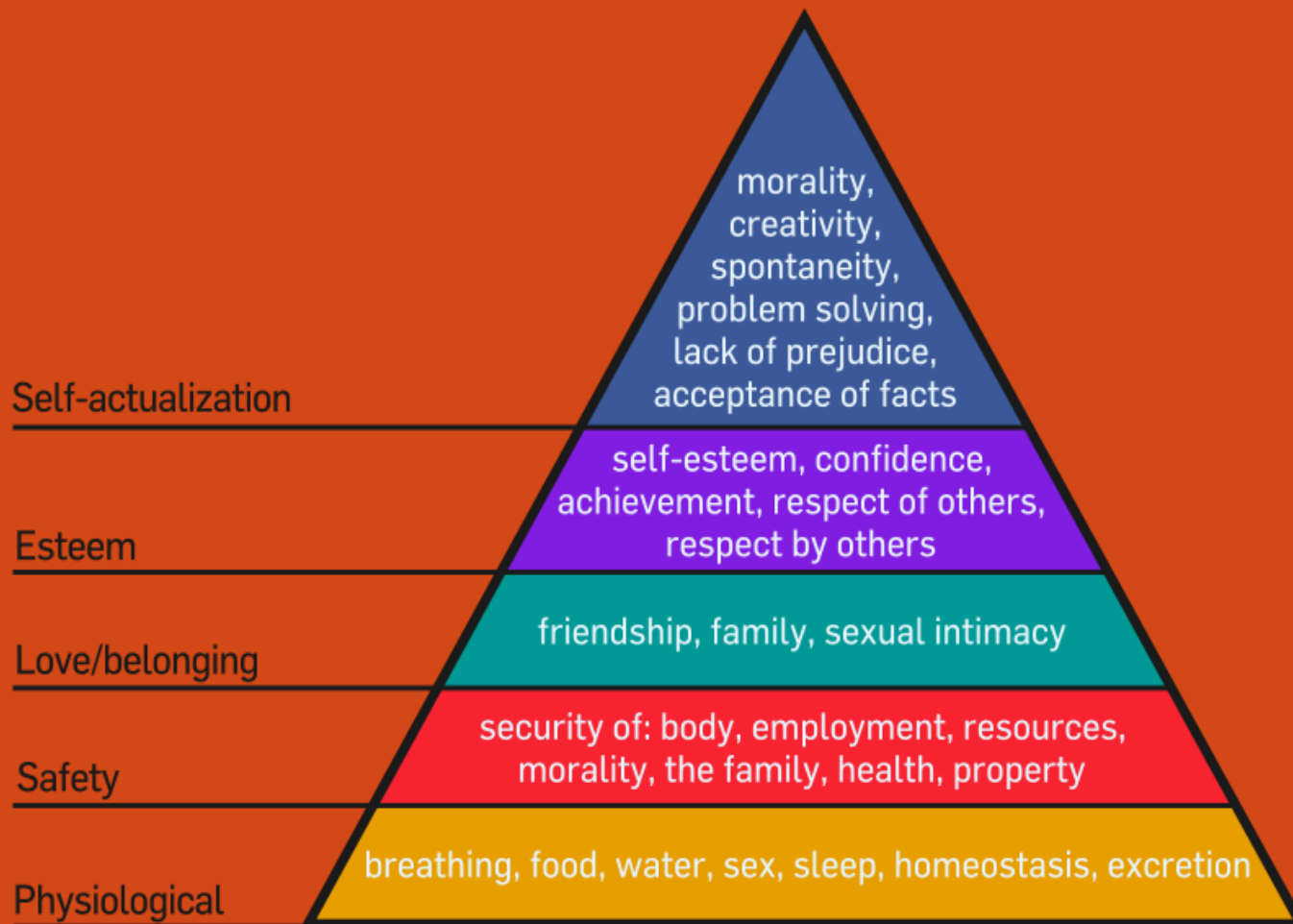
- Focused on coping and survival
- Little formal education
- Low self-esteem/self-confidence
- Uncomfortable around teachers
- Materially and emotionally stressed

See Thurston, L. P., & Navarrete, L. A. (2011). Rural, poverty-level mothers: A comparative study of those with and without children who have special needs. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 30(1), 39-46.

# FURTHERMORE...

*“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

# MASLOW'S (1943) HIERARCHY

- “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





# APPLIED TO STUDENTS

- 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



# PARENTS?

- A thorough and systematic review of the literature reveals that Maslow's Hierarchy has not yet been specifically applied to parents.



# PHYSIOLOGICAL



- *“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?”*

# SOCIAL/LOVE/BELONGING



*“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”*

# ESTEEM



*“Will they value my opinion?”*

*“Do they think I am a bad parent?”*

# SELF-ACTUALIZATION



*“Am I a partner in my child’s educational process?”*

*“Did I help solve some problems?”*

# THE IEP MEETING

*“Parents often view the IEP meeting as an opportunity for educators to brief them on the failures of their child”  
(Fish, 2006, p. 57)*



# RESEARCH ABOUT PARENTS PERCEPTIONS OF THE IEP MEETING

- 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

- Fish, W. W. (2006). Perceptions of parents of students with autism towards the IEP meeting: A case study of one family support group chapter. *Education, 127*(1), 56-68.
- Fish, W. W. (2008). The IEP meeting: Perceptions of parents of students who receive special education services. *Preventing School Failure, 53*(1), 8-14.

# PLANNING FOR THE MEETING

- 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

Weishaar, P. M. (2010). Twelve ways to incorporate strengths-based planning into the IEP process. *The Clearing House*, 83, 207 – 210.

# PRESENTATION AT THE IEP 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).

# THE IEP MEETING

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

Weishaar, P. M. (2010). Twelve ways to incorporate strengths-based planning into the IEP process. *The Clearing House*, 83, 207 – 210.

# STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS WITH PARENTS

**For:**

- **teachers**
- **schools**
- **administrators**
- **teacher educators**

# KNOW YOUR STUDENTS' PARENTS

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

# HIDDEN RULES OF ECONOMIC CLASS

Payne, R.K. (2005). *A framework for understanding poverty (4th ed.)*. Highlands, TX: aha! Process, Inc.

|                       | Poverty   | Middle Class  | Wealth   |
|-----------------------|---|---|--|
| <b>Possessions</b>    | People  | Things  | “One of a Kind” objects, legacies, pedigrees   |
| <b>Personality</b>    | Is for entertainment, sense of humor is highly valued                           | Is for acquisition and stability. Achievement is highly valued                                  | Is for connections, financial, political, social connections highly valued                         |
| <b>Clothing</b>       | Clothing valued for individual style and expression of personality.             | Clothing valued for its quality and acceptance into the norms of middle class. Label important. | Clothing valued for its artistic sense and expression. Designer important.                         |
| <b>Time</b>           | Present most important. Decision made for moment based on feelings or survival. | Future most important. Decision made against future ramifications.                              | Traditions and past history most important. Decision made partially on basis of tradition decorum. |
| <b>Education</b>      | Valued and revered as abstract but not as reality. Education is about facts.    | Crucial for climbing success ladder and making money.   | Necessary tradition for making and maintaining connections.  |
| <b>Language</b>       | Casual register. Language is about survival.                                    | Formal register. Language is about negotiation.   | Formal register. Language is about connection.   |
| <b>Driving Forces</b> | Survival, relationships, entertainment.   | Work and achievement.   | Financial, political, social, connections.   |
| <b>Destiny</b>        | Believes in fate. Cannot do much to mitigate chance.                            | Believes in choice. Can change future with good choices now.                                    | Noblesse oblige.   |

# 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:
  - Rock, M. L. (2000). Parents as equal partners: Balancing the scales in IEP development. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 32(6), 30-37.

# 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

- Dabkowski, D. M., (2004). Encouraging active parent participation in IEP team meetings. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 36, 34-39.
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# RESOURCES

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