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# Parent Partnerships: Promoting Student Growth of Exceptional Students

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## Introduction & Purpose

Meaningful parent partnerships are key in the educational process (Lueder, 1998/2000), especially for students with high incidence disabilities, as these students often “slip through the cracks.” Academic success and quality of learning improve for students of all ages and abilities when the family and school join forces (National Education Association Policy and Practice Department, 2008). This study analyzed parent partnerships in various school settings. Data was used to develop a meaningful parent partnership model to promote student growth, both academically and socially. Data collected allowed us to learn how individuals in varying roles within the educational system and parents presently view the involvement of families of students with special needs.

## Literature Review

When parental involvement is high, it is likely the students' opportunity for success will also be high. Evidence indicates although the condition of the parent-school relationship does have an impact on the level of parent involvement and student achievement, strong parent-child relationships have a far greater impact (McNeal, 2014).

### Barriers To Parental Engagement

#### Parent Financial & Employment Issues

- lack of money
- lack of access to financial resources
- lack of access to educational resources due to minimal monetary funds
- lack of time due to work schedules and working multiple jobs

Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2012; Olmstead, 2013; Williams & Sanchez, 2013

#### Parent & Familial Issues

- parents' personal negative experiences with the educational system
- negative interactions with staff members
- an overall negative social experience
- conflict between the family's beliefs/cultural values and the school system's expectations

Gross et al., 2015; Jaynes, 2015; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Mendez, 2010; Williams & Sanchez, 2013

#### School Climate Issues

- territorialism and a closed-door or disconnected vibe

Gross et al., 2015; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Olmstead, 2013

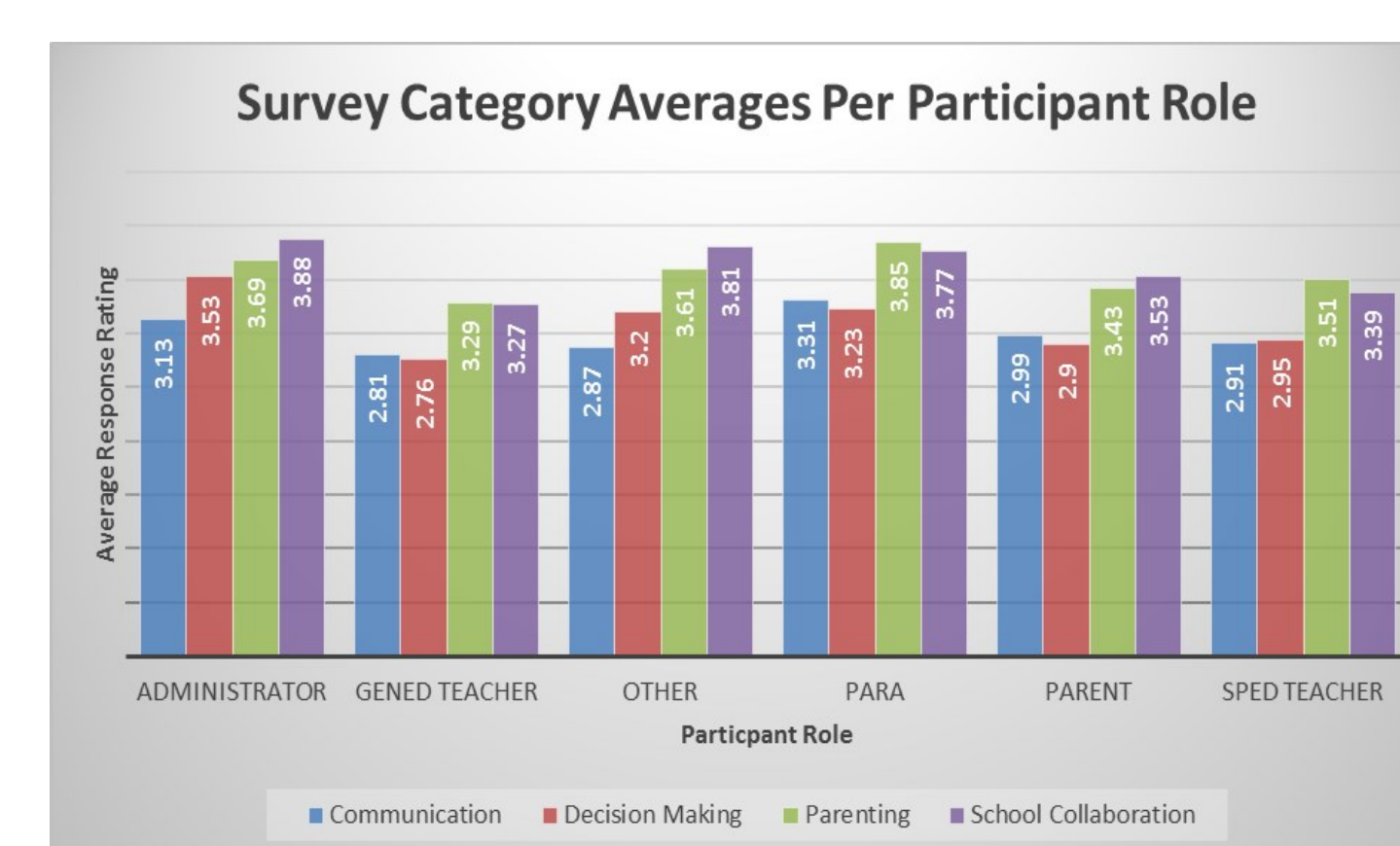
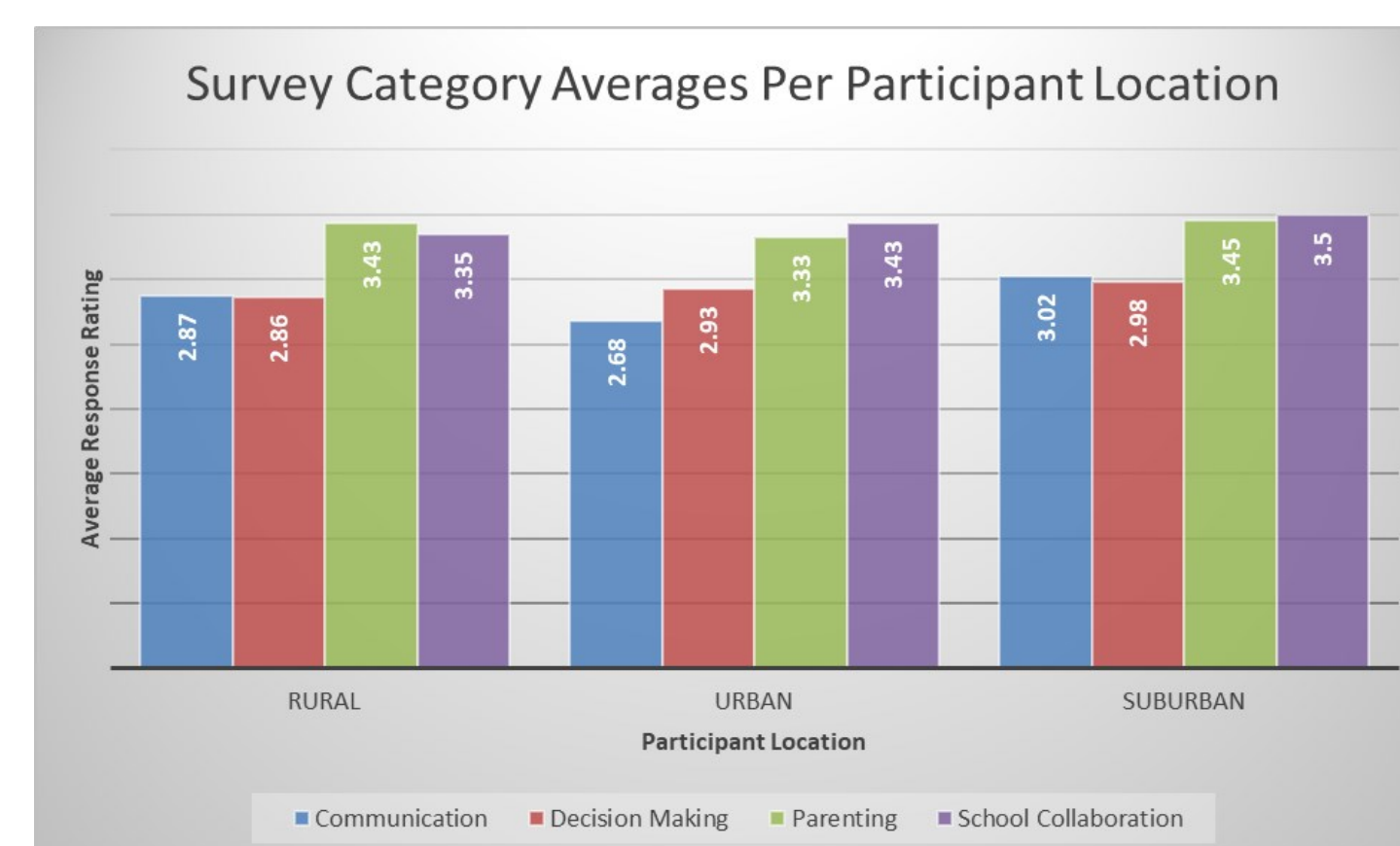
## Methods

### Setting/Participants

Participants included six administrators, 62 general education teachers, five general educators who are also parents of students with special needs, 25 parents, one participant who is both a general educator and special educator, 32 special educators, two special educators who are also parents of students with special needs, five paraeducator professionals, and five who identified with other educational roles completed an online Google form survey.

### Data Collection/Analysis

Data were gathered using a survey questionnaire adapted from the “Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships” (Salinas et al., 1999). Two sections were not utilized during this study due to their irrelevance for this particular study. The survey was completed electronically by participants via a Google form. Responses by participants to prompt statements were given using a Likert type rating scale from 1 (not occurring) to 5 (extensively), and then gathered on a spreadsheet and analyzed. In order to better analyze the data on the spreadsheet, text was replaced with the corresponding number according to the Likert scale used for this study. Four general groups of people were originally targeted for participation in this study, including administration personnel, general educators, special educators, and parents. Data were also gathered regarding participant location: rural, suburban, and urban.



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## Findings

Participant responses for parenting and collaboration were rated the highest, regardless of the school setting or the participant's role. The averages for communication were consistently the lowest or second lowest across setting and participant role. Within this category, paraeducators yielded a higher average than did either general educators or special educators. This result reinforces some of the barriers from the previous research relating to parents seeing a lack of consistent communication among school personnel. In addition, several participants noted similar barriers in the open-ended questions as did study participants throughout previous literature review studies. These included a lack of time due to work schedules and other commitments, lack of technology access and understanding, mobility and transportation issues, and cultural factors.

## Implications

