“Together is Better.” A workshop for immigrant parents to support effective parent-teacher communication

by

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Abstract

This project is a workshop that contains knowledge about special education and activities to develop skills to improve in a positive way the relationship between immigrant parents and teachers in the special education field. Culture and the special education system are factors to take into consideration when creating a relationship between immigrant parents and teachers. This project helps to provide immigrant parents with tools such as knowledge of concepts like: inclusion, roles and responsibilities within special education, assessments and IEPs. At the same time, this project is intended to create a safe and friendly environment to facilitate and practice effective communication skills with the purpose of building positive pedagogical partnerships.

*Keywords: immigrant Parents, teachers, special Education, and workshop*
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Parents are the major influence in a child’s life. Parenting in the home has a significant impact on children’s achievement throughout life, more than parents’ social class or level of education (Lee, Bristow, Faircloth & Macvarish, 2014). Therefore, building a strong relationship among teachers, learning resource teachers and parents as pedagogical partners and finding strategies for it is a key to educational success.

Parents of children in need of special education are, by virtue of their roles as parents, heavily involved in their child’s education. They have roles to play in establishing the child’s eligibility for special education, identifying what the child’s educational plan should contain, and monitoring whether the plan is being put into effect or not. Parents are called on to advocate and negotiate for their child in situations where everyone else in the room is a professional in education and child development and where many of those same professionals will be part of the child’s daily life that year and for several years to come. Special education practices should be parent-friendly or parent-oriented, particularly in terms of supporting parental competence and conserving parental resources (Czapanskiy, 2014). In countries like Canada, culture should be taken into account when talking about how parents react; therefore, this project talks about the relationship between immigrant parents – teachers.

This chapter will describe an overview of the importance of supporting parents, specifically immigrant parents of children with special needs during their educational process, exposing some of the obstacles that need to be overcome in the relationship between immigrant parents and teachers. Based on the literature in the field, information will be collected about what
educational processes and knowledge contribute as an important piece of the puzzle in the special educational field in order to support relationships between parents and teachers.

**Special Education**

Special education involves teaching all students regardless of ability and need. The history of education in Canada, as in many other countries, was exclusive to a certain group of people. Children with disabilities were in most cases excluded from school (Rotatori, 2014). There have been four paradigms of the educational process for special needs children that have been identified as special education:

- **Isolation** – where students with disabilities were only allowed to attend isolated settings and had no access to public schools.

- **Integration** – in which students were allowed to attend educational programs when appropriate, most of the times during non-academic classes.

- **Inclusion** – in which students are not only present during the classes but also have a sense of belonging.

- **Empowerment and self-determination** – focuses on better preparing students for the highest degree of independence possible.

Pollaway et al. (as cited in Rotario, 2016) argued that somehow each of the paradigms is still in existence today. Inclusion, which is the paradigm that has been the most popular, currently has an important impact within the educational curriculum. However, in today’s classroom it is very common to see children with special needs in the same room but not being included in the regular activities. At the same time, Pollaway et al (1996) expressed positive thoughts about the importance of empowerment and self-determination. The essence of these two paradigms will give the power to children in their educational process.
In British Columbia, the process to define a child as student with a special need requires the interaction of different professionals. In the *Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines* (BC Ministry of Education, 2016) the roles and responsibilities for the following agents are defined: Ministry of Education, School District, Schools, Parents and Students. As reported by Lai and Vadeboncoeur (2012), parents’ roles and responsibilities are dictated in the manual; however, they are not defined. A more clear description of the process, as well as the roles and responsibilities of parents of students support would be valuable.

According to the British Columbia Teacher’s Federation (BCTF), within public schools in BC the amount of students with special needs has been around 10% out of the student’s general population (British Columbia Teacher’s Federation, 2017). That will also mean that at around the same amount of families need guidance to deal in collaboration with teachers on the learning process of the child.

**Immigrant Parents**

Canada has long been, and continues to be, a land of immigration. Since Confederation in 1867, more than 17 million immigrants have come to Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016). Students with immigrant backgrounds are disproportionately identified as having special educational needs (Markova, 2015).

Statistics of the Ministry of Education in British Columbia, reveal that by January of 2017 there were 66,285 students categorized as English Language Learners (ELL). Even though ELL is not categorized as special education, those numbers represent the amount of immigrant students included in the educational system. The 10.33% of the student population in the province of British Columbia are immigrant. According to the statistics these students are more concentrated in grades two and three. This scholastic period is crucial for a child’s lifetime. It is
at this time where they learn how to socialize, acquire knowledge and get the basis to live their lives. Teachers and parents will be the ones who facilitate this information for children. For immigrant parents, culture will impact ways to behave, feel and think in this new country.

There is a cultural shock that happens when families immigrate to Canada from another country. Winkelman (1994) defines cultural shock as “a multifaceted experience resulting from numerous stressors occurring in contact with a different culture” (Winkelman, 1994, p. 121). Due to some societies becoming increasingly multicultural, people experience varying degrees of cultural shock in unfamiliar cultures or subcultural settings.

The complex expectations of raising a child in the current cultural context are diverse. Nowadays, technology and social media have a deep impact on everyday life while raising children. If we need any kind of information, parents can easily access Internet and find an answer (not necessarily the right one). According to Sharon Hays, there is an intensive parenting in this era. Parents want to spend tremendous amounts of time, energy and money in raising their children. In this desperate desire to fulfill many areas on a child, Hays suggests that parents are now more likely than before to also take their children to specialists to address any atypical behaviors in the child (Lee, Bristow, Faircloth & Macvarish, 2014).

Let us use an imaginary situation as an example: consider a family who has only arrived in Canada a few years ago, a mother, a father and a son. At the time of arrival in Canada the son was unable to speak his own language. After a year, neither English nor his mother languages were a part of his vocabulary. His parents then decided to take him to the doctor and here is where all the different emotions and confusion began. Most likely, after a couple of evaluations, his parents will be told that their son might have an autism diagnosis. Parent’s first reaction would be “what does autism means”. The diagnosis of autism just to mention an example of
special needs has a growth of 455% in students from 2001 to 2016 (British Columbia Teacher’s Federation, 2017).

Dealing with all these cultural differences can already be overwhelming to the immigrant parent. Imagine experiencing culture shock at the same time as being told that your child has a disability (physical, intellectual or both). There must be moments of not really understanding what is happening. On top of that, imagine dealing with the needs of the child. It will be require support from parents and teachers in order for them to facilitate and build educational tools for the child.

Coming to Canada and learning to adjust to its new cultural practices requires parents to consider many aspects of their new society, including educational practices and expectations. When parents have a child with a disability, the adjustment can be even more challenging.

The developmental disabilities are viewed differently in different cultures. ‘Blame’ for a disability may be placed on the mother or both parents, or the child’s condition may be considered an “act of God”. One example is when individuals from South East Asian believe that disabilities happen for past mistakes made by ancestors (Baxter & Mahoney, 2016). Some cultures freely combine traditional beliefs with biological models such as disease, degeneration, and dysfunction. Mexican, Haitian and Latin American cultures may see disability as the result of a mother (or family) being cursed (Baxter & Mahoney, 2016).

The differences between countries are significant. In comparison with a Latin American country such as Mexico, there are differences in regards with Special Education. Even though the policy of inclusive education exists, the actual day to day has struggles for this policy to be followed (Rotario, 2016). Special education is a work in progress activity in Latin America.
Considering the above, parents from Mexico in Canada might find changes in the process and procedures when dealing with their child with Special Needs.

**Personal Context**

Coming to Canada has been culturally shocking for me. Even though I have travelled to different countries in America, studying and living in Canada has been an amazing experience dealing with different habits. Moving with my family would have been hard work for all of us to feel adapted to the system. Canada is a very welcoming country that embraces diversity in all its ways. However, as immigrants there are certain differences that we as immigrants have to face.

From where I come from (Latin America), people are not straightforward when explaining a problem. Here in Canada, most people are very open when sharing their thoughts and feelings. Language barriers are also different because it might be challenging to express what we truly want to say. The education system is also different. One of the differences is that here, special education really matters or at least is something that the government, schools and teachers are in favor of. Technology and medicine is also advanced. In Canada, there are more efforts for diagnosis and treatments.

It is hard to even imagine the responsibility, emotions, and frustration that immigrant parents feel when someone that you are responsible for has something that will lead to having a different learning process than most people. In addition, these immigrant parents will have to deal with teachers and the learning process at school.

**Benefits and Challenges of Parent-Teacher Relationships**

**Benefits.**

One of the benefits of parent involvement that teachers report is using parents as teaching resources (Lai & Vadeboncouer, 2012). That involvement needs to have positive and proactive
significance in order to accomplish the main goal, which is for the child to learn while being educated. The inputs that immigrant parents can provide about their child’s previous experience, expectations, interests, needs, cultural and language background are valuable.

Thinking in this process, having immigrant parents informed and with an open attitude to create a collaborative relationship with teachers would make a more smooth process for immigrant parents, teachers and of course for the student with a special need.

The alliance between immigrant parents and teachers should be strong and wise enough to target the goal of education. The goal of education is to provide academic and behavioral advice to a child in order for them to live a good life.

**Challenges.**

Having parents with different cultures, not only influences the way they think but also the way they talk. The language can be a barrier in between the teachers and immigrant parents. In the research of Lai and Vadeboncouver (2012), they mentioned that immigrant parents are cast as non-professionals who even do not realize how to show respect for teacher’s busy schedule. All these differences between cultures and miscommunication can lead the learning process of a student to be impacted.

Another potential challenge is an “over involved” parent. This parent is characterized as a parent who acts like a teacher or tells the teacher what to do (Lai & Vadeboncour, 2012). Possessing too much or less participation on the student’s education field, causes different reactions in the relationship between immigrant parents and teachers.

**Overview of the Project**

Given the importance of immigrant parent-teacher relationships for supporting the learning of children with special needs, and the challenges of understanding atypical diagnoses,
supporting student learning needs, and navigating the Canadian system of special education for immigrant parents, support for transitions to school are important.

Therefore this project responds to the question:

What knowledge or skills are important for immigrant parents of students with special needs to understand in order to support their children in their school experience?

The purpose of this project is to create a workshop for multicultural parents with children with special needs. This workshop will facilitate information about the special education process in British Columbia, and reflect on the communication strategies for how to build a significant relationship with teachers.

Michelle Schwarz (n/d), emphasizes that through workshops, people can learn interpersonal skills, verbal communication skills, successful collaboration and effective techniques. Most importantly, she describes how, as a result of synergy and discussion, a group of people that can often produce higher quality solutions to a problem than when thinking alone.

To create this workshop it is important to collect information related to the special educational process in British Columbia, previous research about the relationship and its gaps between teachers and immigrant parents, immigrant backgrounds, attitudes and perceptions and best practices on how to create workshops. This project will create a workshop for immigrant parents to support their school involvement and parent teacher partnerships during their child’s elementary scholar period.

This workshop is intended to create first a safe environment for immigrant parents to be open to receive and assimilate information. As a second point, the workshop will provide basic information such as process and procedures of the manual of special education services in a dynamic and understandable manner. No less important, during the workshop immigrant parents
will have a space to strengthen their confidence and communication skills with the purpose of creating strong collaboration skills with teachers.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter reviews literature pertinent to the research question in this project. What do immigrant parents of students with exceptionalities need to understand, and what skills do they need to have, in order to support their children in their school experience? The field of special education and the importance of the relationship between immigrant parents and teachers have been the focus of attention in different countries around the world. Murray, Handyside, Straka and Arton (2013) have concluded, “both parents and professionals could benefit from increased interactions and education on how to create successful partnerships” (Murray et al., 2013, p. 166).

This chapter is divided into four sections: section one will address inclusion in Canada, and the value of its practice and roles and responsibilities within inclusion in the special education field. Section two will review aspects of perception and the relationship between immigrant parents and teachers. The focus of section three is a review of research made on the pursuit of communication and collaboration between immigrant parents and teachers within the special education system. Section four reviews the theoretical framework of this project based on an ecological theory developed by Bronfenbrenner.

Inclusion in Special Education

“Education is a cornerstone of responsible citizenship in robust and stable democracies” (Crawford, 2009, p. 58). After family, most of the core values, behaviors, academic knowledge, and relationship attitudes people have are learned at school. Therefore, the basis of how a person behaves has a strong connection with their education background.

Since the mid 1980’s, inclusion has been a powerful keyword in Canada. Canadian
schools have been chasing the concept of a standard “one size fits all” within the educational system (Lupart, 2009, p. 15). Under that concept, all students should be measured by the same standards. However, inclusion has brought a wider meaning regarding education for all.

According to the Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines (BC Ministry of Education, 2016), inclusion is described as the principle that all students should have access to the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their education. The practice of inclusion is not necessarily synonymous with integration and goes beyond placement to include meaningful participation and the promotion of interaction with others (BC Ministry of Education, 2016, V). Inclusion involves all students’ welcomed, valued, and learning together as members in a regular educational classrooms, regardless of their particular learning characteristics and needs (Makoelle, 2014). Education is not anymore just about providing knowledge and concepts to students; now it goes beyond that. Inclusion is about welcoming all students in the educational process, involving them in an environment where they feel welcomed and included (Katz, 2009).

The resource of A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines (BC Ministry of Education, 2016) was created with the purpose of having a reference guide for legislation, ministry policy, and guidelines to assist school boards in the creation of programs and services for special needs students to meet their educational goals. This manual has different sections regarding special education; however this project will make reference to the roles and responsibilities of teachers, teacher’s assistant and parents, the creation of IEPs (Individual Education Plan), and assessments for children with the possibility of having a special need.

Teachers, Assistant Teacher and Immigrant Parent’s Roles and Responsibilities.

Within education and special education, roles and responsibilities play a key element in creating inclusive environments. Confusion arises when people do not know what to do. Katz
SUPPORT EFFECTIVE PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATION

(2013) says that educators have reported that limited resources, increasing student diversity, and lack of training create doubt in the possibility of successfully executing full inclusion in classrooms. Not knowing what to do and a lack of knowledge in their own roles as teachers to special needs students might therefore lead to a gap in achieving inclusion. Defining the roles and responsibilities helps designate a clear path for teachers to follow in order to achieve their goals. In the literature reviewed, there are many roles identified at schools in the special education field. In the case of this project, the roles and responsibilities of teachers, teacher’s assistants, and parents will be reviewed.

A classroom teacher for students with special needs is responsible for designing, supervising, and assessing the educational program for that student (BC Ministry of Education, 2016). The manual points out that a teacher’s role is best done in consultation with the student and the parents. Part of their responsibilities is to have a relationship with other entities within the student’s education. However, there are times where this relationship does not happen, not necessarily because they are not willing to, but because teachers do not know how to do it. Crawford (2009) mentions that classroom teachers are not receiving much pre- or in-service training on how to work with paraeducators.

According to the WorkBC website (2018), there are a variety of common job titles for teacher’s assistants which are: education assistant (EA), student support assistant, teaching assistant, special education teacher assistant, paraeducator/paraprofessional educator, education program assistant, lunchroom supervisor and student monitor. A teacher’s assistant assists the teacher with instructional responsibilities. Teacher’s assistants also have a “primary role” in creating inclusion within the classroom when they become experts on how to help in the success of a student (Crawford, C. 2009). Lupart (2009) discusses that the teacher assistant’s role is to
follow the designed programs for students with special needs, and to perform functions that range from personal care to assisting the teacher with instructional programs. In the same way, if EAs had to deal with children’s health-related procedures, training would have to be provided (BC Ministry of Education, 2016). According to Lupart (2009), a method to help teachers with their program planning is increasing the number of teacher assistants during the first weeks of the year. In order for an authentic inclusion in schools, teachers are the key individuals in supporting the learning of every child (Lupart, 2009).

Immigrant parents play a vital role in the education of their children with special needs by working in partnership with educators. They are responsible for supporting the education of their children by enrolling them at school, and requesting for instructions on how to improve the education of their child (Ministry of Education, 2016). The importance of considering the role of these immigrant parents in the educational inclusion process is well recognized.

Both in-school and out-of-school activities allow immigrant parents of students in the community to get to know one another. Consequently, there will be relationship and community support for the families of special needs students after school, on holidays, and during the summer when they are at the local park or community center. Due to parents of children with special needs already tend to feel isolated a lack of community involvement is likely to increase their isolation (Katz, 2013). Therefore one of an immigrant parent’s main roles is to create a link with educators that will help encourage more in-school and out-of-school activities.

Teachers, teaching assistants, and immigrant parents need to be able to fully assimilate their roles as members of a community trying to build an inclusive school environment. Having the right training in their roles will allow them to build positive relationships, solve problems, and create the best possible future for students, creating a team that works together.
Assessments and IEPs as support tools.

Considering that part of the success of inclusion depends on appropriate changes made in the classroom, in the school, in the education system itself, and in the society, assessments and IEPs (Individual Educational Plan) serve as additional pieces of support in an inclusive classroom (Katz, 2013). “The educational system in most jurisdictions typically requires that students thought to have disabilities requiring services/accommodations should be formally assessed and categorized by professionals as having specific physical, intellectual/developmental, learning, emotional/behavioral, mental health or sensory disabilities” (Lupart, 2009, p. 63). In order to enroll a student into a category of special education, and more importantly, in order to provide a better support for them, assessments need to be taken. Once a student has been assessed and identified with a special need, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is typically created (Lupart, 2009).

Assessment is the process of gathering information to monitor progress and make educational decisions as necessary (Overton, 2016). In order to determine if a student is to be included into a special education program within schools, children need to be assessed. According to the Special Education Service Manual (Ministry of Education, 2016), the word assessment is defined as a systematic process of gathering information in order to make appropriate educational decisions for a student. It is a collaborative and progressive process designed to identify the student's strengths and needs, set goals, and achieve results in the identification and implementation of selected educational strategies (Ministry of Education, 2016, p. V).

There are different tests made to identify learning disabilities in students. In British Columbia and many other places, Intelligent Quotient (IQ) tests are typically used. To allocate
special education funding, the ministry uses the discrepancies between IQ test scores and the standard scores in students. For example Siegel (2000) explains that if there is a significant discrepancy between the scores, the student is said to have a learning disability. However, one caveat is that if the scores do not show a discrepancy between IQ and reading scores, students are not considered reading disabled.

After a student has been assessed and identified as needing special support in education, an IEP needs to be prepared and approved. The Individual Educational Plan (IEP) is a document prepared and approved by the school board and parents of the student with special needs (BC Ministry of Education, 2016). It describes individual goals, adaptations, modifications, services to be provided, and it measures and tracks the achievements of students.

There is a diversity of templates when it comes to creating the IEP, since each school will accommodate this document to the needs and goals of the student. However, there are specific items that the IEP needs to have: (1) the student’s information (name, grade, previous assessments, current performance in areas of strengths); (2) the school’s information (school name, classroom teacher, resource teacher, team members, family, current performance in areas of challenge); (3) three goals with strategies and assessment criterion for each, aimed at developing the strengths and talents of the student; and (4) three goals for interventions at the breakdown points, with strategies and assessment criterion for each (Katz, 2013).

Teachers have found it very difficult to provide focused, intensive instruction for students with Learning Disabilities (LD) in the general classroom (McLeskey et al., 2012) However, the goals set out in an IEP may serve as a basis for responding to the progress of students who are not expected to follow the standard curriculum (Lupart, 2009).
Practicing inclusion plays a valuable role in the educational system. Beyond the primary benefit of providing better support for all students academically, it is only through the practice of inclusion in schools that students with special needs, teachers, immigrant parents, and ultimately society, can participate in a welcoming, inclusive, and altruistic social attitude. When children feel that they belong and that they are welcomed, it is easier for them to grow up to become responsible and loving citizens who contribute to a better society.

Knowing the facts and understanding the concepts about inclusion assists families and teachers in providing accurate support to students with special needs. Even though in this project there will be specific mentions of the interaction between immigrant parents and teachers during assessments or IEP meetings, there are other situations where immigrant parents and teachers need to interact, such as evaluations, parental interviews, sports events, etc. In the same way, it is teamwork and individual perceptions that will affect the outcome of the support given to the students with special needs, which in turn will affect the outcome of a successful inclusion program.

**Perceptions in the Relationship between Parents and Teachers**

A factor that affects relationships is perception. Perception affects how people tend to label situations and other people. When it comes to the family’s role in the education of children with special needs, teachers seemed to have a difficult time judging how to proceed with the family. This leads to different reactions from teachers towards their relationship with students and their parents.

There is literature pertinent to the different perceptions that exist in the relationship between immigrant parents and teachers. However, there will be also mentioned literature review about non-immigrant parents as for the fact of including important aspects that all parents have
when dealing with special education and that not all literature is narrowed to immigrant parents. A qualitative study about the participation of immigrant families with children with special needs, conducted by Paniagua (2015), observed that “teachers manifested doubts and stated that ‘things were not so simple’” (Paniagua, 2015, p. 53). Teachers’ expectations towards students might be accurate, but they might incur bias in student evaluation, especially when students belong to a minority group (Markova et al., 2016). This not only is a perception from teachers but everyone has different biases towards people and situations. Teachers may hold lower educational expectations for students with immigrant backgrounds or special education needs because of cumulative social and academic disadvantages. “When people have a positive attitude about a specific object, they typically also have more positive affective and behavioral associations with the object” (Markova et al., 2016, p. 556). It is important for teachers to embrace diversity in order to have a positive perception towards immigrant students with special needs.

A study conducted by Markova, Cate, and Krolak-Schwerdt (2016) included forty-six pre-service teachers, and fifteen of the participants had at least one family member or close friend with special needs identified. Researchers developed a questionnaire to collect demographic information to evaluate implicit and explicit attitudes. Implicit attitudes were defined as the spontaneous reactions to an object. On the other hand, explicit attitudes were the ones in which people have consciously controlled reactions to an object, based on previous experiences or learned knowledge. Results from the study showed that teacher’s implicit attitudes were different towards students with immigrant backgrounds (neutral) than towards students without immigrant backgrounds (positive). However, Markova (2016) discusses that the lack of experience working with different ethnicities might have influenced the results. This
shows evidence of the importance of taking into account different aspects such as culture when working with diverse people in the educational system.

In another study conducted by Bacon and Causto-Theoharis (2012), researchers wanted to investigate the process of parent advocacy and how parents are positioned within the United States special education system. Parents who participated in this study were connected through a parent advocacy centre. Data was collected with open-ended interviews and during observed IEP meetings. As a result, parents whose children were being pulled out from regular classrooms frequently fought for more related services to be delivered within the general education classroom (Bacon & Causton-Theoharis, 2012). Parents are aware and willing to do as much as possible in order to maintain their children in a regular classroom, to gain the benefits of an inclusive education.

Culture affects the interaction between immigrant parents and teachers. Chu (2014) led an exploratory qualitative study aimed at examining the perspectives of special education teachers and immigrant parents regarding the home to school communication of Chinese American students with disabilities. It was conducted via in-depth interviews, observations, and follow-up conversations with participants. Participants were teachers and immigrant parents from schools identified with Chinese American students. Parents in this research had at least one child with a disability or disabilities. According to Vygotsky, “the interaction between human activities and cultural contexts can explain how a person’s view of the world is shaped” (as cited in Chu, 2014, p. 245). Participants in this study revealed that they had different perspectives on how they communicate with one another and with the school. Culture played a vital role in their communication.

Culture influences the different approaches and perceptions in an immigrant parent-
teacher relationship. Crosnoe and Ansari (2015) observed the ways that immigrant parents manage children’s educational experiences. Their study consisted of evaluating data and conducting focus groups. On their findings, foreign-born Latinas had significantly lower scores in their school involvement in comparison to participants who were born in the United States. According to the study, local parents are more actively involved in school activities than immigrant parents (Crosnoe & Ansari, 2015). This perception impacts the way teachers and parents deal with the children’s educational process.

Cohen and Miguel (2018) stated that immigrant parents from Mexico identified the word “love” as a description for their child with autism, emphasizing that desire of affection that these immigrant parents express to their child. One of the findings reveals that mothers of children with autism believe that autism awareness and understanding of the condition should not be confined to the school, but that everyone else needs to understand as well. Immigrant parents are willing to attend parenting classes in order to gain knowledge about how to deal with their children, academically speaking. The most intriguing finding to emerge from this exploration is the tendency for Latina-school partnerships in spirit, but in reality these partnerships occur in ways that could blunt their positive effects (Cohen & Miguel, 2018).

Moreover, Paniagua (2015) asserts that because ethnocentricity has different points of view, there are lower expectations from immigrant parents regarding the relationship of immigrant parents and teachers in special education. Different perceptions tend affect how people are judged or labeled; these perceptions are based on differences among culture, appearance, and tastes. Immigrant parents are not excluded from being labeled as either “good” or “bad” parents (Paniagua, 2015). There are assumptions from teachers that parents from other cultures will manage situations differently than parents born and raised in the same country. For
example, Latina immigrant mothers perceive that their relationship with teachers is supportive. Conversely, in another study conducted by Crosnoe and Ansari (2015), the researchers commented that Latina immigrant mothers’ actual interactions with teachers tend to be more passive when teachers are being directive. There is a different reaction in Latina immigrant mothers to straightforward directions.

Being born in another country different from their parent’s origin country brings challenging consequences to children and parents. Some of the challenges that teachers have to deal with, regarding immigrant students, are social and emotional. In addition to any special need, social and emotional challenges need to be taken into account during the educational process. The language barrier will also influence the perception of the relationship between immigrant parents and teachers (Paniagua, 2015). Thus, Paniagua (2015) argues in his study regarding findings that the “lack of proficiency in Catalan or Spanish, the lack of previous schooling or of stimulus from the families was highlighted as additional problems. Therefore, the family background played a critical role when teachers tried to understand the source of the problem” (Paniagua, 2015, p.53). Difficulties in language can lead to misunderstandings, and then to different perceptions, creating different attitudes towards an object. Ultimately, all those aspects will influence how to approach a child, an immigrant parent, or even a teacher.

Findings reported by Blustein, Carter and McMillan (2016) were that no two parents were likely to hold exactly the same expectations, priorities, or concerns for their children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). There are external factors that influence the learning experience for students. Lupart (2009) claims that students’ lives have been influenced by society, culture, linguistic abilities, academics, behaviors, gender, and sexual preferences. Similarly, Levin (2009) asserts, “gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, language, immigration
status, and disability are some of the differences among people relevant to their education” (Levin, 2009, p. 105).

Understanding the differences among people develops the idea that teachers, immigrant parents, and students with special needs will see situations with different perceptions. However, understanding the way they interact and communicate is necessary in conceptualizing ways in which one can build harmonic interactions between them.

**Pursuit of communication and collaboration of immigrant parents within the special education system**

Immigrant families are a fundamental part in the education of their children with special needs. Levin (2009) suggests that immigrants are much better educated than a century ago. People who are better educated are more aware of their rights and their participation in society. According to Lupart (2009), there is a need from families to support their children’s education due to the complexity of the issues surrounding the inclusion of students with special needs into the classroom. Since the early 1990s, the number of landed immigrants has remained relatively high, with an average of approximately 235,000 new immigrants per year (Statistics Canada, 2016).

The relationship between immigrant parents and teachers is an important key for the academic development of a child with special needs. In special education, collaboration with parents has emerged as an important factor in providing quality services to students with special needs. Olivos (2009) argues that the “benefits of collaboration are viewed as mutually inclusive for educators, parents, and, most importantly, students” (Olivos, 2009, p. 109). Collaboration within inclusion shows valuable results in the social and emotional educational environment.
Good quality education for children is shown by positive relationships within the school environment and within families. Having their family as the first point of human contact and a model for relationships makes the student’s family possibly the most knowledgeable on their children’s needs. Therefore, Vianne Timmons (as cited in Lupart, 2009) asserts that forming collaborative relationships between families and schools will benefit both sides. If the children’s family shares information such as common behaviors, and likes or dislikes in a child, teachers will have a wider knowledge about the children and will better be able to judge how to interact with them. In turn, having that strong relationship will also encourage teachers to share valuable information to immigrant parents on the child’s behavior in school in order to further help the parents understand and relate to their children at home.

Parental involvement has an important role in regular and in special education. According to Prins and Willson (as cited in Lai, 2012) a good parent relationship is the one that is recognized by school personnel and their definition of involvement. If an immigrant parent is narrowly focused on one viewpoint for their child, it is likely that the viewpoint may miss either the real issue or the real solution and thus it cannot contribute to their child’s overall educational experience. Depending on what the parent focuses on, one can determine whether it is good or bad parenting (Lai, 2012). Getting involved with the school influences the dynamic that immigrant parents and teachers will have in their relationship.

“New ways of sharing, collaborating, and learning from and with our professional colleagues as an accepted process of lifelong learning will need to be invented” (Lupart, 2009, p. 24). To enhance the collaboration between immigrant parents and teachers, researchers have taken the communication aspect into consideration. Stanley, Beamish, and Bryer (2005) revealed in their study how teachers actively engaged parents of children within special education in
communications related to Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings and personalized goal setting. They stated that when teachers have a professional position in accountability that values communication with parents, then meaningful accountability would occur. When immigrant parents respect the contribution that schools make to their child’s learning, then the home is more likely to become actively involved in educational decision making.

Culture.

Culture influences the collaboration between home and school. For example, research by Irvine (2012) considers that special educators, like other teachers, need more training in understanding how semantics, accents, dialect, and discussion modes manifest themselves when they communicate with their diverse students and their families. This research focuses on the complexity of the relationship between multicultural education and special education from an African-American perspective. According to Irvine (2012), when there is a cultural mismatch or cultural incompatibility between students and their school, certain negative outcomes might occur, such as miscommunication; confrontations between the student, the teacher, and the home; hostility; alienation; diminished self-esteem; and possible misclassification in special education programs (Irvine, 2012).

Irvine (2012) argues that culture influences the relationship between immigrant parents and teachers. Culture influences a teacher’s response to the diverse students’ abilities, preferences, and motivations. When having cultural awareness, the communication and collaboration between immigrant parents and teachers can turn into a respectful and helpful communication. On the other hand, a lack of awareness in cultural differences leads to misunderstandings and lack of communication (Irvine, 2012). Thus, there is a necessity to
include cultural knowledge to the repertoire of special education teachers in order to assist them in communicating well with immigrant parents and vice versa.

Differences in language also affect communication. Difficulties in communication arise when language barriers get in the way. Second language parents have a harder time advocating for their children. There are many thoughts and ideas that parents need to communicate to teachers with the intention of facilitating information to improve their children’s educational environment that they do not have the linguistic capacity to express. Thus, immigrant parents often feel powerless due to their difficulties in expressing their ideas, opinions, thoughts, and knowledge (Starr, 2014). Therefore, it is necessary to have effective communication between immigrant parents and teachers.

Sinkkonen and Kyttala’s (2014) research demonstrated that multicultural education works on the basis of the presence of two or more cultures. They concluded that respecting and understanding different cultural diversity should be part of the educational goals. One of the main challenges in immigrant education has been the language barrier. There are times where it is difficult to identify if learning difficulties are due to different cultures or due to actual category of the special needs (Sinkkonen & Kyttala, 2014). From an individual’s point of view, adjusting to a new culture and a new school system are one of the main challenges of education. Multiculturalism in schools generates challenges for individual immigrants, their families, schools, and the entire school system.

Sinkkonen and Kyttala (2014) conducted the study with the purpose of sharing already good existing practices that teachers use when working with immigrant students. Successful social integration at the family level will positively affect children’s academic achievement and adaptation into the Finnish school system. However, the study is based in Finland and their
educational system is not very multicultural. The social integration with immigrant families will lead to a need having effective communication.

**Effective communication.**

Effective communication in the relationship between immigrant parents and teachers leads to beneficial interactions. For inclusion to be successful, good communication between immigrant parents and teachers needs to happen. Effective communication involves adequate and constant interactions between two or more parties. When including culture into the communication process, immigrant parents and teachers need to be equipped with appropriate skills and knowledge. Chu (2014) suggests skills and knowledge that teachers need to be equipped with in order to communicate effectively with students with special needs and their families. First, Chu suggests acknowledging cultural differences. In addition, “knowledge [of cultural differences] also helps parents feel better equipped to participate fully in the decision making process, which is a critical element of empowerment” (Murray et al., 2013, p. 157). Second, Chu suggests emphasizing in high quality instruction in a classroom. Third, Chu believes in creating an inclusive environment where children and families will feel a sense of belonging.

In the study made by Stanley, Beamish, and Bryer (2005) they collected information from parents and regular classroom teachers of primary students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The information was collected through activities such as focus groups, individual home-to-school communication and face-to-face interviews. The study was based on the interactions of parents and teachers during Individualized Educational Program (IEP) meetings. The study concluded that communication between parents and teachers needs to be ongoing and informal to add value to the relationship, rather than only communicating during IEP meetings. This kind of
communication will encourage active home-to-school interaction beyond the IEP meetings. Informal communication can be found during birthday parties, school field trips, and talent shows at schools. Bacon and Causton-Theoharis (2012) agrees that positive relationships between parents and schools have not been adequately made. At the same time, immigrant parents and teachers feel the necessity for creating positive relationships. To create positive relationships effective communication skills need to be involved. Starr, Martini and Kuo (2014) mention the importance of the type and frequency of communication between immigrant parents and school. For example, immigrant parents want to be informed of the current educational progress of their child. Meaning that communication needs to be constant between immigrant parents and teachers.

The handbook on inclusive education in school, for parents of children with special needs (Kulusic, 2014), clearly encourages that a strong parent-teacher relationship needs trust, mutual respect, open communication, active listening, flexibility, and shared responsibility. Other characteristics of good communication include being open-minded, caring, and have active listening.

**Theoretical Framework**

One theoretical framework that helps to understand the interactions between immigrant parents and teachers of students with special needs is Bronfenbrenner’s theory. “His model of influences places the individual at the centre of extended social and environmental influences. It contextualizes individuals while at the same time acknowledging their uniqueness” (Lupart, 2009, p. 1). As mentioned throughout this chapter, relationships between immigrant parents and teachers have their unique peculiarities, such as acknowledging culture, providing and acknowledging special educational concepts, and empowering immigrant parents and teachers to
create better learning environments. The scientific paradigms that Bromfenbrenner discusses in his ecological theory are: microsystem, the interactions involved in this paradigm are the closest to home, family, teachers; mesosystem, the interactions involved in this paradigm are in between the microsystem such as home and school for example; exosystem, in this paradigm are involved the interactions with non direct environment to the child such as parent’s job, government influences; macrosystem, culture is the one that influences this paradigm and the beliefs and values of the child; and chronosystem, in which the interactions have a different effect on the child depending on the time and place that this interactions happen (Lupart, 2009). Therefore, including these interactions in this project will cover learning environments of the participants in this project.

**Conclusion**

Literature reviewed in this chapter investigated how to improve the communicative relationship between immigrant parents and teachers in the special education field. The value of practicing inclusion creates welcoming and accepting environments within the relationship between immigrant parents and teachers. Understanding their respective roles and responsibilities in the education of the child helps to build confidence in immigrant parents, teachers, and teaching assistants, allowing them to play their part effectively. Perceptions also play a large role in influencing the dynamic of the immigrant parent-teacher relationship. Nevertheless, there is a gap between cultural differences in immigrant parents and the knowledge needed in order to achieve good communication with teachers of special need students.

It is worth taking into account that none of the research has been made in British Columbia, where the population is heavily multicultural. Emotions, channels of communication, and frequency also influence the relationship between immigrant parents and teachers. Both
immigrant parents and professionals could benefit from increased interactions and increased education on how to create successful partnerships (Murray, 2013).

Concluding this chapter, this literature review points to the importance of creating tools to facilitate knowledge and skills to immigrant parents with children with special needs. In order to do so a workshop will be created as a tool to facilitate knowledge and skills to improve the relationship between immigrant parents and teachers. These tools help in promoting a sense of belonging and fostering welcoming spaces to create inclusive environments among immigrant parents, teachers and students with special needs. This literature review also facilitates knowledge about special education processes such as IEPs and Assessments.
Chapter 3

Implementation of a Workshop Project

Knowledge and effective communication skills benefit the relationship between immigrant parents and teachers. To build optimal learning processes among different cultures, it is necessary to take into consideration the importance of creating safe learning environments where participants are perceived as capable of learning to their maximum potential (Cummins, 2009). Therefore the intention of this workshop is to equip immigrant parents of children with special needs with the knowledge and skills they will need to maneuver through the Canadian special education system. The name of the workshop is “Together is Better”, which represents the value of parents and teachers working together.

The planning of this workshop is based on the well-detailed guidance that Mindtools provides. The Mindtools website (2018) suggests that when planning a workshop the main aspects to take into consideration are: defining the goals, deciding who will attend, choosing the right location, creating the agenda, and developing a follow-up plan.

This workshop will be divided into four sessions. There will be activities to engage the learning process and Google drive presentations for each session (see Appendix A). Each session will take a maximum of two hours and a half and are made through Google drive. There will be activities to engage the learning process. The decision to use Google drive is based on the support for inclusion, features that promote inclusion, and the ease of accessibility. Davis claims that Google Drive facilitates multiple means of engagement, representation, action, and expression (Davis, 2016). It can be used offline, and when making changes, everyone can see it. It is also user-friendly and it is free.

Background literature
In addition, Vygotsky’s philosophy on learning states that there are “different concepts that explain the learning process for example: “psychological tools, verbal thinking, mediation, internalization, self-regulation, inner speech, and the zone of proximal development (ZPD)” (Liu & Matthews, 2012). The ZPD is the interaction between what children are currently thinking about, such as how to solve an immediate problem, and the development or growth of their thinking “through adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (as cited in Perry and Woolfolk, 2015).

Having a space where learning is facilitated by experience, sharing ideas, verbal thinking, and inner speech, will enable positive changes in the student’s assimilation of learning. Therefore, a workshop, which is a series of meetings emphasizing interaction and exchange of information among a usually small number of participants, fits to accomplish the question of this project.

All sessions in this workshop are connected to the sequence of the paradigms that Bronfenbrenner mentioned on the previous chapter explains in his theory. Session one starts based on the Microsystem, which describes the environment of direct influence: family, peers, school, and neighborhood. Session two and three are based on the Mesosystem, where it is the link of the personal interactions within the various microsystems, such as assessments or IEP meetings that influences the development of the children. At the same time, the evaluation of aspects for the external environment during assessments or IEP meetings will also relate to the exosystem. The exosystem takes into consideration external environments such as school in the learning process of an individual. The workshop project also considers the influence of society and culture in the successful implementation of an inclusive educational environment; therefore there will be multicultural elements in this workshop.
Workshop sessions guide

Immigrant parents will need to sign up for the workshop at least three weeks before it starts (see Appendix B). After participants have signed up for the workshop, review the data on the forms to help the facilitator have an overview of the demographic population that will participate in the workshop. There will be general instructions for all sessions: (1) each session will have a different inspirational quote related to the topic; (2) at the end of each session participants will evaluate the workshop through a thermometer activity evaluation sheet by indicating how satisfying the session was and also include their personal comments about the session. This will help the facilitator to improve for the next session (see Appendix C); (3) set up: round tables in central meeting space, tables along the back of the room to hold refreshments, doors should open 30 minutes prior to the start of the session to allow informal socializing and refreshments; and for session two and three guest speakers will be invited to share their expertise on fields of assessments and IEPs, they will be invited through an invitation letter (see Appendix D). For each session there is stipulated time for each activity. It is recommended that the workshop for immigrant parents is offered through two sessions on the same day, in order to consider participants’ availability. The best times to have the project are early in the morning or late in the afternoon (Rogasner, 2010). The structure of the lesson plans have been taken from the engage new york website (engage, n/d)

Session One. There will be a warm welcome to immigrant parents. The objectives of the session will be presented to the participants. The main objectives presented in this session are: to facilitate confidence, provide an overview of the meaning of inclusion, and provide learning and fun activities within the educational system. The major agenda in this session is to: (1) talk about the definitions of inclusion and roles and responsibilities, (2) create an inclusive and safe
environment in which all attendees feel part of the session, (3) provide strategies on how to build better communication between parents and teachers throughout an activity and teamwork, (4) briefly show the workshop timeline, and (5) provide participants with a task to think about for next session. The workshop facilitator will empower parents by telling them that they have the tools to help teachers provide better support to their students.

**Session Two.** Session two will deal with how special education teachers and immigrant parents need to communicate during assessments. To begin the session, the guest speaker on the topic will be introduced, followed by an icebreaker activity for the participants and the facilitator. This will enable them to create a safe environment in which they can share ideas and create knowledge. This icebreaker activity will be the task asked on session one. The guest speaker and facilitator will participate in the activity. The guest speaker will discuss the following topics: “Definition of Assessments” (what it is, what the results mean, and the different types), with a “Focus on WIIAT” assessment, because it is the most commonly used assessment in the British Columbia district. Facilitator will discuss effective communication strategies (Headlee, 2016). Through a role-play activity, participants will learn how to ask questions, what questions to ask and how to communicate relevant information about their children. The session will conclude with a discussion about empowering parents to the theme of “changing and learning can be fun” in order to improve their confidence and creativity.

**Session Three.** To start this session, there will be allotted time for parents to share some of the insights from the past session. Communication plays an important role in the relationship between parents and teachers during the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) meetings. The purpose of this session will be to give immigrant parents tools on how to understand and communicate during IEP meetings. At the beginning of the session participants will be asked to
share thoughts or comments about last session to promote discussion and what they have liked in this new session. A guest speaker in the field will be invited to assist in facilitating this session. As in session two, there will be an icebreaker activity to create a safe environment. The topics to be discussed by the expert will be:

1. Definitions of IEP;
2. Roles and responsibilities during IEP sessions;
3. Process of creating an IEP

Before providing a space to do a role-play where participants can practice some of the concepts heard during the session, participants will participate in an activity to recall effective communication strategies. At the end of the session participants will be asked to reflect on the role-play activity.

**Session Four.** The last session is intended to inspire parents into being open to learn, and to persist in the difficult learning process, so that they can help their children succeed as special education students. This session will also intend to do a recap of the takeaways from the last sessions. At the beginning of the session, participants will practice a mindfulness activity in order to practice listening skills. To achieve the goal of contemplating the takeaways from the workshop, participants will be asked to write one communication goal that they have learned and will put into practice; this with the intention of making a commitment to themselves to aim for a continuous improvement in their communication skills. Parents will be asked to write down their fears on a balloon and then to let it go. After, parents will write down their takeaways on a stone, to promote empowerment. Parents will be asked to complete a questionnaire to evaluate their understanding and to receive feedback from the workshop that will help to improve it (see Appendix E).
Tips for the facilitator when running the workshop

Scott Berkun (2013) describes workshops as hopeful things. He mentions in his blog that a good workshop gives to the participants the opportunity for guided instruction in doing things. Here are some of the tips he shares:

- “It is part of the facilitator’s role to create an environment where everyone is comfortable enough to take risks and learn something. The facilitator should also facilitate emotions to the participants.
- Facilitators need to remember that they walk participants through to show how to do something.
- Facilitate the exercise so everyone can try to do the activities in the workshop.
- Do not forget to debrief leading to a discussion where participants can reflect about the topics seeing during the activities” (Berkun, p.2, 2013)

A checklist to prepare the workshop has been created (see Appendix F). Overall, the project aims to build effective relationships between immigrant parents or guardians with teachers.
Chapter 4

Conclusions and Reflections

Conclusion

**Summary.** This project highlights one of the ways to share knowledge and skills with immigrant parents or guardians so that they can create an effective relationship with teachers of their children with a special need throughout their education. This workshop starts with the idea of promoting a friendly comfortable environment among the participants in addition to a space to share knowledge and practice effective communication skills. Inclusion is one of the themes mentioned in the workshop with the purpose of showing the benefits of practicing inclusion in the classroom. It includes activities that enable participants to practice it. Through research it is evident that teachers and immigrant parents of children with special needs do not necessarily have the best relationship when dealing with the educational needs of the child. Therefore, this workshop will contribute to the alliance between teachers and immigrant parents.

**Benefits.** This workshop can be beneficial for all parents, not only immigrant parents. It is intended for immigrant parents and guardians that are raising a child within the special education system. However, all parents are always in need to promote better relationship with their children’s educator. According to research (Chu, 2014; Czapanksiy, 2014; Lai & Vadeboncouer, 2012; Markova, et al., 2016; Olivos, 2009; Paniagua, 2015) the relationship between immigrant parents and teachers needs to be strengthened; however, it has also been found that local parents struggle with their relationship with teachers. Research in the literature supporting this project revealed that having knowledge could benefit the relationship between parents and teachers. Exploring concepts used in special education such as Assessment and the IEP, can benefit parents when it comes to being prepared during the meetings with special
education teachers and helps them feel comfortable in school meetings. Moreover, it will help parents to give relevant information about their child to teachers in order to facilitate the child’s educational process. The activities included in this workshop are also intended to be inclusive for parents, so they can have a better understanding of the importance of inclusive practices and hopefully will keep promoting that practice. Having others in a similar situation can help the participants of this workshop to feel more comfortable when sharing ideas and best practices.

**Limitations.** The language barrier is a limitation of this workshop. English and French are the predominant languages in Canada whereas English is the second language in most of the countries around the world. Therefore, it would be beneficial to have the information supplied by the workshop in different languages, thus providing the participants with a better opportunity to understand this valuable information. Parents are key in their child’s education, and as mentioned throughout this project a positive relationship with teachers will benefit their child’s educational experience. This is why the primary focus of this workshop is on immigrant parents or guardians; however this can be seen as limitation because while parents are being taught how to create better relationship teachers need to also build understanding of the needs interests, and challenges of immigrant parents. The special education process has different concepts and steps. Inclusion, Assessments and IEP’s are the main focus of this workshop because most of the research is based on these concepts due to the common practices and frequent interaction that parents have with teachers on those. However, this can place parents at a disadvantage because there are other important concepts such as techniques of inclusion like the Universal Design for Learning (UDL), how funding works in BC and much more. As a recommendation for other researchers in this area, they can perhaps broaden their scope of topics in their workshop. Parents are not supposed to be experts on the special educational system, that is not part of their roles.
and responsibilities but understanding why and how this process work will help them have a
better understanding and will facilitate a communication with teachers. All provinces across
Canada have differences in their educational system. Lack of research in the relationship
immigrant parents – teachers made in BC was another limitation found. Research of the
relationship between immigrant parents and teachers in other countries like United States, Spain,
China, Korea and provinces within Canada such as Alberta and Ontario are mainly found in this
research.

Reflection

Education in general brings the capacity to be aware of our surroundings, the tools to
create our own thinking, and part of the kit of life to succeed. However, there will always be
challenges through this learning process of education. Challenges for some will be due to socio-
economic matters, others for lack of interest, lack of emotional support, learning or physical
disabilities, or the inability to understand or be understood. In any case, we all have a role to play
in the education process in order for a child to overcome those challenges. The intention of this
project is to create an effective communication dialog between immigrant parents or guardians
and teachers.

Growing up, I remember one of my teachers stressing that family is the basis of society.
We all start our learning process at home, what society is now is the result of what we learnt
when we were children. Children are not only raised by parents but also by grandparents,
relatives or friends also known as guardians. No matter what title that person holds, the role that
they have impacts a child’s life. Today’s society is the result of our parents’ influence on our
learning process. Children with special needs will benefit from the right guidance provided by
their guardians and we will all enjoy a better society as an outcome of that. There is a need for parents to understand the process of education and support of students with special needs.

I always thought that parents were the one and only responsible for my education. Through my learning in this Master’s degree program I have come to realise that the work that teachers are doing is amazing and it can influence a child’s life for better or worse. This is why it is imperative that future workshops in this area include teachers in their development of workshops because teachers do need just as much as support as the parents do. In that way they could have time to improve communication skills and strengthen pedagogical relationships.

When working on the literature review in this project one of the studies discussed the relationship between teachers and Latino mothers. While reading, I found myself relating to the way they reacted when trying to communicate with a teacher of their children with special needs. Despite not being a mother, I couldn’t help but empathise with these Latino Mothers and their desire to make sure that their child with special needs felt loved by their teachers. Along with that idea, feeling understood plays an important role when communicating with others.

Language barriers and difference in cultures as mentioned before can lead to misunderstandings when communicating. Therefore, a suggestion I reflected in this project is to include a facilitator who has an immigrant background in order to show empathy to immigrant parents during the workshop.

The feeling of being welcomed and included is priceless for everyone. Most of the time we hear about the need of children to feel welcomed and included in and out of the classrooms. However, we rarely hear about the importance of making parents of these children feel welcomed as well. Being an integral part of school life, both parents and teachers should work together to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for each other. Inclusion creates
a belonging feeling and as a result reduces stress of people participating in inclusion and gives them optimum opportunities to learn and improve within education. I believe that if everyone felt included, the transition to the empowerment stage of the paradigm will come along. In other words immigrant parents and teachers benefit more when they feel welcomed and included.

Cultural differences are part of the diversity of life in general. Acknowledging, respecting and valuing another way of thinking different than our own brings closer relationships and understanding with others. This will lead to parents and teachers working together and becoming stronger to create better ways to support children within special education programs.

I have learnt new concepts, communication strategies, activities to build effective relationships while creating this workshop. In the final analysis what I have concluded from this project is that there is still a vast amount of work to do in terms of building better relationship between immigrant parents and teachers. However, not only is it imperative to create a good relationship between them but it will also benefit the school community and create better alternate outcomes.
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**Workshop Outline** - Together is better

**Rationale**

This project is the result of the outcomes showed by research on the relationship between immigrant parents and teachers. Due to the importance of bringing together immigrant parents into the inclusive classroom environment in the school system, this workshop will provide information to help them tend to concepts of special education in BC. The intent of this workshop is also to facilitate effective communication strategies through friendly and thoughtful activities. Culture differences can be a challenge to build an effective communication. However, research shows that acknowledging others values and culture will contribute to a better understanding between two people. This workshop will cater activities to promote understanding within the different cultures of the participants. All with the purpose of build better relationships between parents and teachers.

**Target Participants**

- Immigrant parents/guardians of children with special need

**Objectives**

1. Participants will be in a friendly and inclusive environment to promote learning
2. Participants will understand about special education process within the BC educational system
3. Participants will learn effective communication strategies to improve better quality relationships parents - teachers
4. Participants will learn how to communicate during IEP meetings
5. Participants will feel inspired and empowered to build better relationship with teachers in order to better support their children

**Sessions**

4 sessions (Once a week)
1. Introductory Session
2. Explaining the disability to the sibling.
3. Issues siblings of children with a disability may experience.
4. How to identify anxiety and stress in siblings

**Time**

2.5 hours (170 minutes)

**Set Up**

- Round tables in a central meeting space
- Tables along the back of the room to hold refreshments
- Doors should open 30 minutes prior to the start of the session to allow informal mingling and refreshments

**Materials**

Presentation Format

* Computer, projector, and speakers (for the purpose of playing videos)
* Handouts/flyers
* Miscellaneous items (pens, paper, boards, etc)

**Google docs:** [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AIOZ1e8G6Efpgqcr7PQ_8qn5a2oTTJ7QEmmk2jfsCWk/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AIOZ1e8G6Efpgqcr7PQ_8qn5a2oTTJ7QEmmk2jfsCWk/edit?usp=sharing)
Session One
Introduction to “Together is Better”

Objectives
1. Recognize the importance of practicing inclusion
2. Identify roles and responsibilities of parents, teachers and students
3. Promote a variety of effective communication strategies

Inspire quote: “Why fit in, when you were born to STAND OUT”

Implementation

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<tr>
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<th>Who</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Materials/Resources</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<td>Welcome</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>- Welcome everyone</td>
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<td>- Thank them for coming</td>
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<td>- Try to say “welcome” in the different languages’ to</td>
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<td>participants</td>
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<td>Activity 1: “My name is...and I like”</td>
<td>Facilitator; all participants</td>
<td>- Start by presenting yourself as a facilitator. In this activity, say your name and associate it with something that you like and rhymes ex. My name is Maria and I like tortillas. This is an easy and fun way to start getting familiar with everyone’s names.</td>
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<td>10 minutes</td>
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<td>- Participants say hello in their native language to introduce themselves</td>
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<td>Workshop Objectives</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Introduce objectives for the workshop:</td>
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<td>10 minutes</td>
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<td>- Help participants to understand the importance of communication</td>
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<td>- Briefly mentioned that during the four sessions they will talk about IEPs and Assessments</td>
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<td>- Through activities will work on effective communication skills</td>
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<td>Highlight the session quote: “Why fit in, when you</td>
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</table>
| Session Objectives | Facilitator | Introduce objectives for the session:  
- Recognize the importance of practicing inclusion  
- Identify roles and responsibilities of parents, teachers and students  
- Promote a variety of effective communication strategies |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create groups</td>
<td>Facilitator; participants</td>
<td>Ask participants to look under their chairs to find a piece of paper with a color. Everyone with the same color will be a team.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Activity 2: “Inclusion” | Facilitator; participants | The purpose of this activity is for participants to understand the meaning of inclusion. Work in their coloured groups.  
**Take Away:** *We cannot judge how smart others are just by a score on a test.*  
Facilitator instructions:  
- Give each group a box of materials and go over each item in the box  
- Tell them “we are going to have a contest to see which group can finish first”  
- After a minute or two, the group with no limitations will finish and the facilitator will enthusiastically ask for the class to give this group a round of applause. |
| Inclusion Activity Reflection | All participants | In their coloured groups teams discuss the following questions:  
“Why can we not confirm the winning group was not, in fact, the best?  
How did you feel during this activity?  
How might someone feel who has one of these limitations?  
What can we learn from this activity?” (Shaw, S. Oct, 2016) |
### SUPPORT EFFECTIVE PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 3: “Our Education System”</th>
<th>Facilitator; all participants</th>
<th>Read the quote aloud ask the group to interpret the image. Promote discussion around how the different animals might have advantages/disadvantages to climb the tree. Call on two participants to share their ideas.</th>
<th>5 minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion and its value of practice</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Talk to the group about the definition of inclusion. Highlight the research findings of some the benefits of inclusive practices</td>
<td>10 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles and responsibilities</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Discuss the roles and responsibilities in the special education process of:</td>
<td>10 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Think-Pair-Share: benefits of having effective communication with others. Facilitate and discuss four tips on how to have better communication with others.</td>
<td>10 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 4: “The Puzzle”</td>
<td>All participants</td>
<td>Ask participants to split in two equal groups.</td>
<td>8 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Give each team a puzzle to complete</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Make sure not to mention that whoever completes the task first will win.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- One piece of the puzzle will be in the other’s team and vice versa. Participants will not know that until they are about to finish their puzzle and find out they are missing one piece.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puzzle activity Reflection</td>
<td>Facilitator, all</td>
<td>Transition to a discussion of the importance of working</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Reflection - Empowerment | All participants | Recap of the topics discussed:  
- Inclusion, roles and responsibilities, and communication | 5 minutes |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workshop timeline</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Promote the following sessions for the participants to feel engaged in this workshop journey.</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Activity 5: “Task”         |                 | Ask participants a task for next session:  
- “You will present a peculiarity that you feel proud about from your country, or culture or family tradition” For example,: special dishes, traditions, values, etc.  
- They will have around 3 min each to present the activity during the next session. | |
| Evaluation                 | All participants | An evaluation sheet will be handed out which will have a thermometer on it, ask parents to rate the session and if they have any suggestion to include it in the comment area | |
| Thank you!                 | Facilitator     | Genuinely thank the participants for their time and interest in finding ways to help their children. Recall the quote of the day: “Why fit in, when you were born to STAND OUT” | 2 minutes |

Google docs: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TkqEVPpU9aCyy9i-aKMZh9pkkhWdrMy-BWsv0NzORmA/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TkqEVPpU9aCyy9i-aKMZh9pkkhWdrMy-BWsv0NzORmA/edit?usp=sharing)

Google slides: [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1x7bkqz1PGdAjrzSpo3z3Kz-DwJUyryJaZ6HEHt6bmWY/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1x7bkqz1PGdAjrzSpo3z3Kz-DwJUyryJaZ6HEHt6bmWY/edit?usp=sharing)
Session Two
Assessments to “Together is Better”

Objectives
1. Share information about Assessments
2. Acknowledge and value participants in the workshop
3. Share tips of how to build effective communication

Reading Rainbow Tip: “Feedback is the breakfast of champions”

Implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Welcome               | Facilitator| - Welcome everyone  
- Thank them for coming  
- Try to say “welcome” in the different languages’ to participants. Start promoting among parents to remember how to say welcome in different languages |          | 5 minutes |
| Objectives            | Facilitator| - Introduce objectives  
- Help parents to understand a brief concept of “Assessment” as an introduction for today’s session  
- Remind parents that the workshop is to build knowledge together  
- Remind parents that this is a safe and friendly space for everyone to learn |          | 10 minutes |
| Guest speaker introduction | Facilitator| - Introduce Guest Speaker(Assessments):  
- Ex. XXX XXX is a school district psychologist. She has more than 5 years experience assessing students to evaluate and analyze their strengths and challenges in the educational learning process. |          | 5 minutes |
Activity 1: “Acknowledge who I am”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator introduces activity:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Remind participants about last session’s task for today:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“If you brought in an artifact we will start the presentations of now -This is me-, after you first share you artifact with a neighbor”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 4 minutes presentations start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Facilitator will start as an icebreaker to present the peculiarity of the facilitator’s country. Take 2 - 3 minutes for each person to present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After everyone has had the chance to participate, allow 3 minutes to reflect on the activity. For example: We all come from different countries, cultures or homes. We will always have something to share, to be proud of but it is also important to acknowledge everyone’s uniqueness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guest speaker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guest speaker will talk about:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Definition of Assessments (what it is, what the results mean, and a brief description of the different types of assessments that exist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Explain the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test WIAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Share stories/case studies with tips on what is it expected on an assessment meeting with parents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Communication strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talk to the group about different strategies to have effective communication with others:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Do not multitask</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Do not pontificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use open ended questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Go with the flow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- If you don’t know, say you don’t know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Don’t equate your experience with theirs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Try not to speak yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Listen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Be brief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- “Be ready to be amazed”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Activity 2: “Role play”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator; all participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Ask the group to work at their tables and discuss the case study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- After 5 - 8 minutes, ask each group to prepare a role play on how to deal with the situation represented in the case study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Allow each team to do the role play, (5 minutes per group).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**20 minutes**

### Changing and learning can be fun

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Creative ways can change behaviour for the better. Acknowledge the hard work and importance of education in their child, however remind them that they, as adult participants in the lives of the students, also have part of the power to make the inclusion process smoother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- After 2 to 3 minutes call on a few people at different tables and ask them to share what they thought about the video.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**8 minutes**

### Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An evaluation sheet will be handed out which will have a thermometer on it, ask parents to rate the session and if they have any suggestion to include it in the comment area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**5 minutes**

### Closure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Genuinely thank the participants for their time and interest on finding ways to help their children. Recall the quote of the day: <em>Feedback is the breakfast of champions</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**5 minutes**

Google docs: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dhmc2wm910GKUa_Q_w7kU1-4ZeLftmcZzwV2WBd11A/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dhmc2wm910GKUa_Q_w7kU1-4ZeLftmcZzwV2WBd11A/edit?usp=sharing)

Google slides: [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1YdUk5WaEvL-gsrPb5oGBoYKaxCpSXbh6hGafdzQjjnA/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1YdUk5WaEvL-gsrPb5oGBoYKaxCpSXbh6hGafdzQjjnA/edit?usp=sharing)
Session Three

Individual Educational Plan (IEP) to “Together is Better”

Objectives

1. Define the Individual Educational Plan (IEP)
2. Practice effective communication skills during IEP meetings
3. Promote a safe and friendly environment among the participants

Reading Rainbow Tip: “A goal without a plan is just a wish”

Implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Time/Slides</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>- Welcome everyone</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Thank them for coming</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Try to say “welcome” in the different languages’ to participants. Randomly ask parents to say welcome in different languages than theirs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1: “Time to share”</td>
<td>Facilitator; all participants</td>
<td>- Quick review of the last session.</td>
<td></td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Remind participants that everything they share in this space is important and will serve the purpose of taking positive and effective actions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Ask parents to share any questions, doubts or experiences they faced during the week that relates to last session’s topic.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Allow participants to share their thoughts/questions/comments (5 - 7 minutes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Show some questions to promote discussion. Did you face a situation where you could or did use some of the communication strategies revealed/discussed in the last session?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Present guest speaker | Facilitator | - Introduce the guest speaker:  
- Ex. XXX XXX is an special educator teacher with a Master in Special Education. Her work at schools has give her an ... | 5 minutes |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Objectives | Facilitator | Introduce today’s objectives:  
- Define Individual Educational Plans (IEP)  
- Practicing effective communication strategies during IEP meetings | 10 minutes |
| Activity 2: “Value circles” | Facilitator; all participants | This activity is a game in which participants will have a better idea of who their peers are and a little insight into their life. The purpose is to create a friendly environment where all participants including the guest speaker can feel open to share their ideas. At the same time recall at the end of the activity the importance of planning what we want to share or communicate in order to be understood.  
- Follow the instructions in the link | Value circles | 15 minutes |
| Guest speaker presentation | Guest speaker | - Guest speaker will talk about:  
- Definition IEP process  
- Roles and responsibilities during IEP meetings  
- Process of creating an IEP | 45 minutes |
| IEP Meeting Process | Facilitator; all participants | Prepare with IEP tips during and after its’ creation  
- Before an IEP meeting (ex. Prepare some questions)  
- During an IEP meeting (ex. Are goals clearly stated) | 10 minutes |
| Activity 3: “Communication strategies” | Facilitator | Give each table a bag with different phrases that are about the communication strategies mentioned during the last session and some other different phrases that were not mentioned as effective communication strategies. Ask parents in each table to select the ones that they think are good communication tips and ask them to discuss it with their table. | 10 minutes |
### Activity 4: “Roles play”

| Facilitator | - Ask the group to work with their tables and discuss the case study.  
|             | - After 5 - 8 minutes, ask each group to prepare a role play on how to deal with the situation represented on the case study.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>- Allowed each team to do the role play (5 min/group)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Role play reflection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator; all participants</th>
<th>Give the group 3–4 minutes to discuss what was presented in the various role plays, then call on participants at different tables around the room to share.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All participants</th>
<th>An evaluation sheet will be handed out which will have a thermometer on it, ask parents to rate the session and if they have any suggestion to include it in the comment area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Closure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator</th>
<th>Thank the participants for their time and participation. Recall the quote of the day: <em>A goal without a plan is just a wish</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Google docs:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kMZEY16HbQgUYpGGufmB0B3eMGuhCoF1ydK5Ov4nODs/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kMZEY16HbQgUYpGGufmB0B3eMGuhCoF1ydK5Ov4nODs/edit?usp=sharing)

### Google slides:

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1uYerzu-KSD5XnGgNEAvgpmD1rtTXjtUB0jH5dB1xn8c/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1uYerzu-KSD5XnGgNEAvgpmD1rtTXjtUB0jH5dB1xn8c/edit?usp=sharing)
Session Four
Takeaways “Together is Better”

Objectives
1. Parents recall and identify takeaways learned during the workshop
2. Promote collaboration from parents to work with teachers
3. Parents identify benefits of working together with teachers

Reading Rainbow Tip: “Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success”

Implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Materials/ Resources</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>- Welcome everyone</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Thank them for coming</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Try to say “welcome” in the different languages’ to participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Ask if they remember how to say welcome in other languages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1: “Mindfulness -listening”</td>
<td>Facilitator; all participants</td>
<td>- Prepare the participants for the activity by saying: This exercise is designed to open their ears to sound in a non-judgmental way, but most importantly to be present in the moment.</td>
<td>Audio Laptop Projector</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Introduce objectives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Stimulate participants memory to recall insights/learning from previous sessions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2: “Let fears go away”</td>
<td>Facilitator; all participants</td>
<td>- Explain in broad terms how letting go of fears will help them focus on the positive. Even though fears exist because of failures, it is important to keep this quote in mind: “Failure is simply the opportunity to begin again, this</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Support Effective Parent-Teacher Communication**

| Activity 3: “Video - The tree” | All participants | - Play video: “Lead India: The tree”  
- Ask parents to discuss and reflect on the following questions at their tables: What did you think about the video? Can one person do everything on their own? Who needs to start?  
- After 5 minutes, call on a few people from different tables to share their thoughts | 10 minutes |
| Activity 4: “Recap activity (write key words)” | All participants | - Facilitator introduces activity:  
- We are going to talk a lot today about what we have learned during the workshop and our takeaways, but first I want you to identify your key learnings using one word for each.  
- Spend a couple of minutes writing key words on the piece of papers at your tables.  
- After 3 minutes ask parents to place their words (as many as they have at each table) on the front wall.  
- After 3 - 4 minutes, call on a few people at different tables and ask them to share what was discussed. Also make them briefly compare the words all tables have wrote. | 15 minutes |
### Activity 5: “What now?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ask participants to grab a rock from their table and write on the rock a word that represents their commitment for a next step to improve their relationship with teachers. Then ask participants to discuss as a group how the quote of this session: “Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success” relates with the commitments they made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stones on tables (1 per participant)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Survey Reflection:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator; all participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Session Survey Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- An evaluation sheet will be handed out which will have a thermometer on it, ask parents to rate the session and if they have any suggestion to include it in the comment area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop Survey Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ask parents to complete a survey, emphasize the importance of their opinions and ideas to keep improving the workshop to provide spaces and tools to benefit the relationship between parents and teachers. 3-2-1 Survey: three takeaways, two topics they got interested on and one suggestion to improve the workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Handouts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Handout with information of websites and tools about Assessment, IEPs and the general special education process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recall the quotes mentioned in each session, and reflect that it takes time to learn and change but it is possible:

**Why fit in, when you were born to STAND OUT**
Feedback is the breakfast of champions
A goal without a plan is just a wish
Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success

- Ask for show of hands to see how many people will do something differently as a result of what they heard; call on 2 - 3 to people to see what that change will be.

| Closure | Facilitator | Recall the quotes mentioned in each session, and reflect that it takes time to learn and change but it is possible:

  **Why fit in, when you were born to STAND OUT**
  Feedback is the breakfast of champions
  A goal without a plan is just a wish
  Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success

- Ask for show of hands to see how many people will do something differently as a result of what they heard; call on 2 - 3 to people to see what that change will be. | 10 minutes |
Workshop reading list

Session One

1. Quote: Why fit in when you were born to stand out (Okun, 2013)
2. Activity 2: “Inclusion” (Shaw, 2016)
3. Activity 3: “Our education system” (Bari, 2014)
4. Inclusion and its values (Kulusic, 2014 Chapter 1 pp. 5-9)
5. Roles and responsibilities (Kulusic, 2014 Chapter 2 pp. 5-19)
6. Communication (Headlee, 2016)

Session Two

1. Quote: “Feedback is the breakfast of champions” (Smith, 2015)
2. Assessments (Kulusic, 2014 Chapter 4 pp. 6-7)
3. Communication strategies (Headlee, 2016)
4. Video Piano (Event Management Institute, 2011)

Session Three

1. Quote: “A goal without a plan is just a wish”
2. Activity 2: “Value circles” (Thems, n/d)
3. Individual Education Plan (IEP) (Kulusic, 2014 Chapter 4 pp. 9-18)

Session Four

1. Quote: “Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success” (Ford, n/d)
2. Activity 1: “Mindfulness-listening” (James, 2018)
**Reading List workshop - references**


Headlee, C. (2016, Frebruary 16). 10 ways to have a better conversation. Retrieved from: https://www.ted.com/talks/celeste_headlee_10_ways_to_have_a_better_conversation


milinddequinox (2010, February) *Lead India - The Tree*. Retrieved from
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPeeZ6viNgY


Appendix B

Registration Form

**Together is Better - Registration Form**

Please fill out completely so that your registration may be processed promptly

Name

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>Middle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Address

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Postal Code</th>
<th>Province</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

E-mail address

Phone numbers (  ) - -

Home country

When did you arrived to Canada (MM/DD/YYYY)

How many children do you have?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you!

See you soon
Session evaluation – Together is Better

How will you evaluate today’s session Hot, Medium or Cold? Point in the thermometer up to the point that best reflects your current satisfaction of the session.

Hot (Satisfied 😊)  Brief explanation:
I have selected this because...
“Better together”
Nanaimo BC,
(250) 327-2751
bettertogether@workshop.ca

March 13, 20XX
Ms. First name, Last name
123 Address St
Anytown, ST 12345

Dear Ms XXX,
Families are in the need of getting appropriate support in order to support the educational process of their children with special needs. Therefore, I have created a well designed workshop for immigrant parents with the purpose of facilitate right tools to improve their communication skills and create stronger relationships with teachers.
The workshop is intended to be developed in four sessions of two hours each. The second session which is about how to create better communication with teachers during the Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings. I have follow your professional trajectory and understand the knowledge and caring manner on how you manage those meetings. For those reasons I would like to invite you as a special guest speaker to talk about some aspects of the IEP meetings. On the following page are the details.
Thank you in advance for your valuable time. Please do not hesitate in contact me for any further information.

Best regards,

M.Ed., Better Together
Session Three -

Topics:
- Definition IEP process
- Roles and responsibilities during IEP meetings
- Process of creating an IEP
- Case study about IEP meeting

On the following link is the lesson plan created:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kMZrYI6HbQgUYpGGufmB0B3eMGuhCoF1ydK5Ov4nODs/edit
Appendix E

Feedback evaluation

Workshop feedback form – “Together is Better”

Please take a few moments to provide us with some important feedback to keep improving the workshop to provide spaces and tools to benefit the relationship between parents and teachers.

1. Specify three takeaways:
   A) __________________________________________________
   B) __________________________________________________
   C) __________________________________________________

2. Specify two topics you were more interested on
   A) __________________________________________________
   B) __________________________________________________

3. Give us one suggestion to improve this workshop
   A) __________________________________________________

4. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements (Mark an NA if the statement is not applicable)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The materials provided will be useful to me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed the workshop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from [https://remarksoftware.com/sample-forms/2015/08/workshop-feedback-survey/]
## Practical organizational checklist – “Better Together”

**Workshop**

**Facilitator:** XxXxXxX

**Date:** XxXxXx

### Overview & Purpose

To have a guide of the task that need to be completed to the optimal development of the workshop for immigrant parents with children with special needs.

### Before the workshop starts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Done?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receive confirmation of the workshop with specific dates</td>
<td>Three weeks previous the start of the workshop</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrange a salon for at least 12 participants (Facilitator and guest speaker included)</td>
<td>Two weeks previous the start of the workshop</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make sure that in the salon there is:</td>
<td>Two weeks previous the start of the workshop</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Internet access</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- AV hook up with speakers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Wireless mics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Flip charts, markers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Projector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have the materials needed for each session (Review the sessions)</td>
<td>One week before the start of each session</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Support effective Parent-Teacher Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Done</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrange refreshment for each session (water, cookies, fruit)</td>
<td>One week before the start of each session</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collect email and phone information from all participants</td>
<td>Four days before the first session</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send the welcome email</td>
<td>Two days before the first session</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**During the workshop**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Done</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review slides and information before each session</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance list</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make sure all materials on the lesson plan are handy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrive 45 min before the session starts to make sure of:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Internet connection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Equipment is available</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Open the doors 30 mins before the session starts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**After the workshop**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Done</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Send a “Thank you” email (Do not forget to include the files)</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make sure to leave everything tidy in the salon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze the feedback responses from the participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in some adjustments that the workshop might need</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You are doing fine!