

**PERCEIVED PARENTAL KNOWLEDGE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION  
AND ITS RELATED SERVICES**


---

**KELLEY HEFLIN**



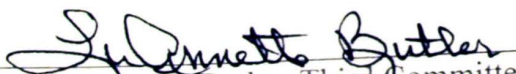
To the Graduate and Research Council:

I am submitting herewith a Field Study written by Kelley Heflin entitled "Perceived Parental Knowledge of Special Education and its Related Services." I have examined the final copy of this Field Study for form and content, and I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Education Specialist, with a major in School Psychology.

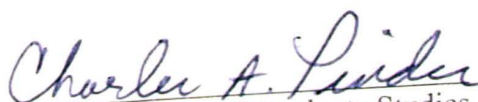
  
Dr. Stuart Bonnington, Major Professor

We have read this Field Study  
and recommend its acceptance:

  
Dr. Larry Lowrance, Second Committee Member

  
Dr. LuAnnette Butler, Third Committee Member

Accepted for the Council:

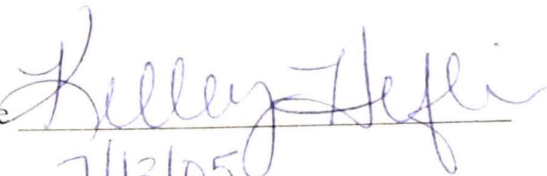
  
Dean, College of Graduate Studies

## STATEMENT OF PERMISSION TO USE

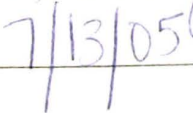
In presenting this Field Study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for an Education Specialist degree at Austin Peay State University, I agree that the Library shall make it available to borrowers under rule of the Library. Brief quotations from this Field Study are allowable without special permission, provided that accurate acknowledgement of the source is made.

Permission for extensive quotation from or reproduction of this Field Study may be granted by my major professor, or in his absence, by the Head of Interlibrary Services when, in the opinion of either, the proposed use of the material is for scholarly purposes. Any copying or use of the material in this Field Study for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Signature



Date



Parental Knowledge of Special Education

and its Related Services

A Field Study Submitted

in partial fulfillment of the

Education Specialist Degree

Kelley Heflin

Summer 2005



## DEDICATION

This Field Study is dedicated to my parents, William and Nancy Heflin, family, and friends who have always believed in me, encouraged me, and continue to inspire me in all that I achieve.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express appreciation to committee members Dr. Stuart Bonnington, Dr. Larry Lowrance, and Dr. LuAnnette Butler for their assistance in completing this endeavor. Also, I would like to thank the Bedford County Department of Education, director of special education Missy Eakin, school principals Karen Scoggins and Jeff Yoes, and teachers for their permission and assistance in gaining information for this research. Finally, I would like express a special thanks to the parents who were willing to devote their time to completing information for this research, in helping to provide needed information for the field of education.



## Abstract

Special education is a rapidly growing, and changing, aspect of our schools today. With the increase in student population, and the diverse options that are available to students with special needs, it is vital to ensure that the understanding of special education continues to evolve with the changes in programming. Seventy-five parents of general education students and 49 parents of students receiving special education services completed a survey to assess their perceived knowledge of a number of special education services, insight into believed helpfulness of the local education agency, amount of exposure to special education services, and feedback on the need for more “parent-friendly” resources. The following hypotheses were considered: parents of students with special education would result in higher ratings of knowledge across areas of special education, parents of students receiving special education for several years would result in higher knowledge ratings than those receiving services for only a brief time, and all respondents would be more knowledgeable in areas of special education most related to society’s view, such as pull-out programming. Two sample *t*-tests were employed to analyze gathered data. Results indicated that a significant difference was not present between the mean scores of parents of students in special education as related to parents of general education students. In addition, no significant difference occurred between the amount of time exposed to special education or the type of service. Overall, however, parental rating indicates that further knowledge in the area of special education is needed and that a majority of parents believe that more “parent-friendly” resources would be beneficial in their understanding of special education.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
1. INTRODUCTION.....	2
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	
Federal Law.....	3
Service Delivery.....	3
Individual Involvement.....	4
Parent Participation.....	5
3. METHOD.....	8
Participants.....	8
Materials.....	8
Design and Procedures.....	9
4. RESULTS.....	11
5. DISCUSSION.....	14
Limitations.....	15
REFERENCES.....	16
APPENDICES.....	18
A. Parent Letter.....	18
B. Informed Consent.....	19
C. Survey.....	20
D. Special Education Brochure.....	22
E. Graduate Student Research Approval Form.....	24
F. IRB Application.....	25
G. IRB Approval Letter.....	32



Parental Knowledge of Special Education and its Related Services

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

What is special education? Due to each individual's diverse orientations and experiences, this question is one that has been pondered throughout the decades of education. Merriam-Webster (2005) defines special education as "classes for students (as the handicapped) with the educational needs." This definition is consistent with the layperson's view of the term, but the fact of the matter is that special education extends beyond the mere removal of students for "special classes." Special education is a comprehensive service that includes a number of factors and diverse individuals. Focusing on only one aspect, such as classes for "special" students may create a premature picture as to what special education actually entails.

## CHAPTER 2

## Review of Literature

*Federal Law*

Although special education began over 200 years ago, the passage of a national special education law did not occur until 1975 (Smith, 11). At that point the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, which is now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), became the governing body of special education ensuring that children with disabilities receive a free and appropriate education (Boyle & Weishaar, 1). IDEA's definition of special education is specific in what the term special education means and what is to be provided as such. The IDEA defines special education as "specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings and instruction in physical education" (Jasper, 22). This "specifically designed instruction" includes related services that are educationally necessary to meet the students individualized needs, including speech/language therapy, audiology, psychological, physical therapy, occupational therapy, recreational therapy, early identification and assessment, counseling, and transportation (Leiter & Krauss, 2004).

*Service Delivery*

The state of Tennessee's Department of Education, Division of Special Education (2005) expressively outlines their purpose as they "promote educational services and programs for all Tennessee's children with special education needs that will enable them to lead productive and independent lives." This expressive statement defines the services



for all students' needs, but the question that arises is all students' needs being met? Leiter and Krauss (2004) address this question as they quote "school systems struggle with containing the costs of individualized services and programs and thus may propose what they can do as opposed to what they should do for a child with complex educational needs." The Committee on Children with Disabilities (2000) outline the fact that special education and its related services present significant opportunities for the children served, and challenges for the educational system, as such factors as the availability of services, designation of responsibility for payment and provision, and conflicting legal imperatives result in vastly different services in various communities. These differences, although expected, should however focus on the center purpose to best serve the student, which is the main purpose outlined in IDEA.

### *Individual Involvement*

With the significant number of related services that are outlined throughout IDEA's mandates for special education, a number of individuals must be involved in ensuring that the service delivery of needed services are adequately delivered. Information gathered from the Journal of Health Care Law & Policy (2002) indicates that after the 1999 U.S. Supreme Court ruling of Cedar Rapids Community School District versus Garret F., districts must fund related services in order to help guarantee that students are integrated into the public schools and furthermore hire and train additional staff to assist in delivering these needed modifications. Special educators may be a paraprofessional (teacher's aide), a resource specialist, a consultant, a special education classroom teacher, or even a school psychologist, speech-language pathologist, an assistive technology specialist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, counselor, or

nurse, among others (Smith, 2001). These individuals, together, provide the multidisciplinary services required by individuals with disabilities. Together they form teams and use collaboration to adapt and modify instruction so students with disabilities can participate and be included in the general education curriculum to the maximal extent possible (Smith, 2001), which is the main focus of special education, as outlined by IDEA.

### *Parent Participation*

Leiter & Krauss (2004) outline, “one of the most celebrated and controversial components of IDEA is the provision for shared decision-making by parents of children receiving special education services and school personnel for determining the educational programs and related services that children receive.” This change “represents a shift from a predominately passive role as recipients of information from school personnel, to a more empowered, active, family-centered role characterized by equal status” (Muscott, 2002). Parents are viewed as more capable of participating in decision-making, as they have more frequent interactions with the child (Turnbull, A., Turnbull, R., Shank, & Leal, 1999). Are parents as involved as the law allows? It is found that parents generally agree that involvement in their children’s education is important; however the level of involvement tends to vary depending on the characteristics of specific families (Lovitt & Cushing, 1999). Special education and the vast amount of issues surrounding eligibility and service delivery have the ability to be extremely intimidating.

According to Leiter and Krauss (2004), critics of parental participation identify the implicit assumption that parents are willing and also able to participate in educational planning as well as the underlying significant power differential, which exists between



school systems and parents. In their study they address parent's level of satisfaction in regards to special education, as well as perceived barriers they face in requesting additional special education services for their children. Results indicated that only 15% of parents in their study requested additional services, while in regards to satisfaction 83% of parents were content with the educational services their children received (Leiter & Krauss, 2004). These results may be far from clear, however. Leiter and Krauss (2004) identify the possible limitation that "parents may be unaware of their rights or of the services for which their children are eligible, suggesting that parents' expectations of special education may be compromised by what they do (and do not) know." As outlined in Lovitt & Cushing (1999), "often it is assumed that parents who don't interact with their child's school don't care much about their child's education." It is important to evaluate the presence of a lack of understanding, rather than assuming a lack of dedication.

### *Present Study*

The present study evaluates parental knowledge of special education and related services. Parents of both special education and general education students are included in the sample. These parents will complete a survey measuring their current knowledge in special education and its trends. The following hypothesis will be considered:

Hypothesis 1: Parents of students receiving or previously receiving special education services will have higher mean scores on the parental knowledge survey as compared to general education parents.

Hypothesis 2: Amount of years involved in special education will result in higher mean scores as compared to those having less exposure.

Hypothesis 3: All parental participants will have higher mean scores in the areas of special education most related to the layperson's view, such as pull-out programming, when compared to other related special education services.

Information gathered from this study is important as it gives insight into perceived parental knowledge of special education and the services it provides. The educational system strives to enhance parental involvement, and it is beneficial to understand the needs of the parents. The purpose of this study is to identify areas of need for parent education, in relation to special education services. By addressing the areas parents lack understanding in, one can establish needed resources in assisting the parents in gaining the utmost knowledge in received and potentially available services to assist their child in reaching educational success.

## CHAPTER 3

## Method

*Participants*

The parental knowledge survey was distributed to 497 parents of students K-12 from the Bedford County School System. No exclusionary data was used, and all parents were asked to participate. Participants were selected based on desire to participate, noted by their completion and return of the survey. The sample size consisted of 124 parents, 75 parents of regular education students and 49 parents of students currently receiving or previously receiving special education services. Seven additional parents returned surveys, however were rejected due to incomplete data. Based on parental input on the measure, experience with special education services varied. Nine parents indicated their student received services for less than one year, 26 for one to three years, seven for four to six years, and seven for more than six years.

*Materials*

A brief survey (14 questions) was distributed to participants. This information gathered vital information about the parents' prior exposure to special education and how influential each parent feels the school system has been in building their knowledge in the area, as well as their insight into the value of additional provided information specifically designed for parents (see Appendix C). Participants were asked to circle or fill in the appropriate responses that apply to their children, whether or not they had ever been involved in special education services, how long, and how helpful they perceive the school system is or has been in assisting them in their knowledge of special education. The second portion of the survey consisted of a 5-point Likert scale with responses

ranging from 1 (*not knowledgeable at all*) to 5 (*very knowledgeable*). Participants were asked to rate their responses to questions that relate to their perceived knowledge of special education and a number of related services provided under the special education “umbrella” (see Appendix C). This survey has no prior established reliability and validity, as it was created by the experimenter, however it was thoroughly reviewed prior to administration in attempt to ensure face validity, in that the measure assessed the appropriate construct and was applicable in asking questions valuable to the stated hypotheses of the study.

### *Design and Procedures*

A convenience sample was utilized and demographic information collected from each parent agreeing to participate. Group assignment was determined based on experience with special education (child involved in special education or child never involved in special education). Possible extraneous variables that should be considered within this study could be the following: lack of parental involvement in utilizing school provided resources, area of the sample (within a consistent geographical area), possible language barrier, academic hindrances (such as illiteracy), and sample size.

Prior to survey distribution, the principal investigator obtained consent from the Bedford County Department of Education (verbal), individual school principals (verbal), and the Austin Peay State University Institutional Research Board (Appendix F). Potential participants were sent, through their child, a packet containing a cover letter explaining the reason for research (see Appendix A), an informed consent documenting the purpose of the study, individual risks and benefits, participation and willingness to withdraw from the study, and contact information of the principal investigator and faculty



advisor (see Appendix B), and a copy of the survey (see Appendix C). Within this information, the experimenter outlined that all information would be kept confidential, at no time would their information be identified, data would be kept in sealed envelopes until measured by the experimenter, and that all research materials will be kept in the committee chair's office for a period of three years. Instructions were included on the survey, asking all participants to complete items without skipping any. Participants were allowed as much time as needed, as it is completed at their convenience, but were given a deadline date (Monday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2005) to return completed surveys for inclusion in the study. The participants were instructed to place completed surveys in the provided envelope, seal, and return to their child's school. All returned surveys were collected at a centralized location (school office) and placed in a box provided by the experimenter.

## CHAPTER 4

## Results

The overall mean results from the parent survey, including both groups (special education and general education), was  $M = 2.6$ ,  $SD = 1.3$ . Mean scores were also calculated for each group, which yielded scores  $M = 2.9$ ,  $SD = 1.4$  and  $M = 2.4$ ,  $SD = 1.2$ , respectively. A two-sample  $t$ -test was utilized to determine if a statistically significant difference was present between the means of the two groups. Results,  $t(122) = 0.36$ ,  $p > .05$  indicated that, although some variance between groups is noted, it is not considered statistically significant. This outcome indicates no calculated deviation is found between parental knowledge of special education, and the factor of whether or not their children have been involved in special education.

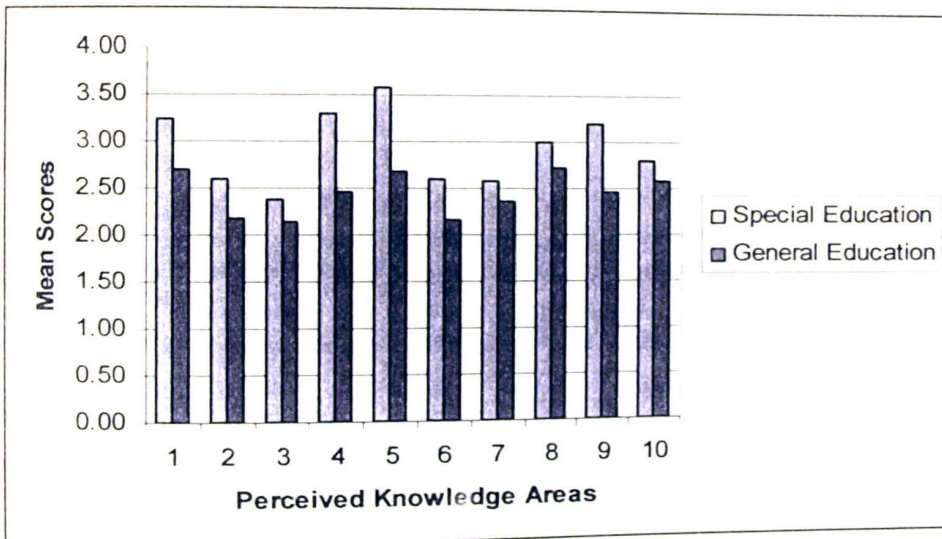


Table 1. Perceived knowledge of parents of students in special education versus general education

Similarly, a measure of variance between parents of special education students was employed to determine if significant differences occurred between years of exposure to special education services. Mean areas were determined according to parent involvement in special education under one year, one to three years, four to six years, and

greater than six years. A two-sample  $t$ -test was utilized to determine if discrepancy between responses in the less than one year and greater than six years samples were statistically significant in comparison. With  $t(14) = 0.55$ ,  $p > .05$ , a significant difference was not present between period of service exposure and perceived knowledge.

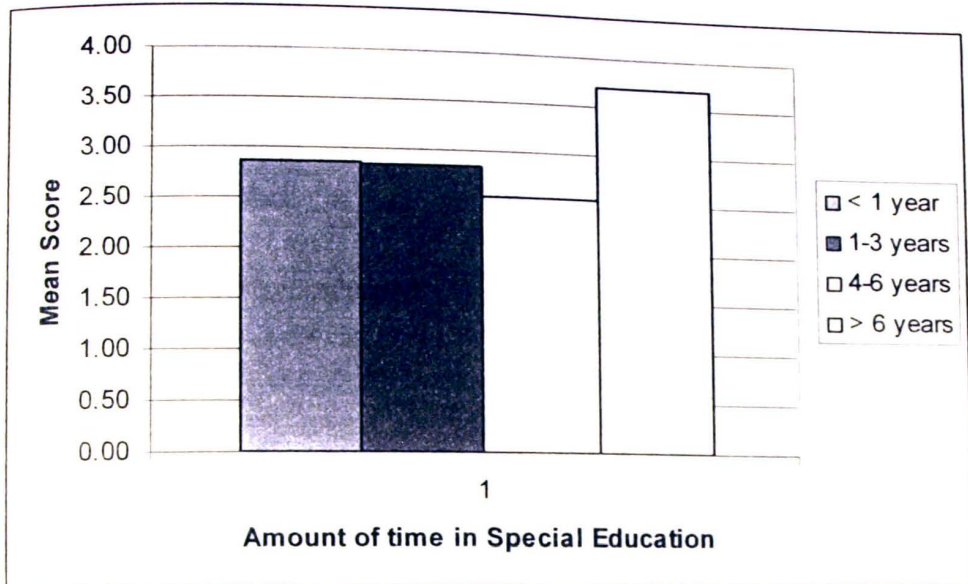


Table 2. Parental knowledge and student time in special education

Finally, a two sample  $t$  test was also employed to determine statistical significance of perceived knowledge between special education services. The most calculated variance was found between speech/language services and inclusion. A two-sample  $t$ -test,  $t(246) = 0.14$ ,  $p > .05$ , identified that the variation between perceived knowledge is not considered statistically significant. Although inclusion is determined the mean area of least knowledge, as hypothesized, no significant split is found between it and other mean areas.

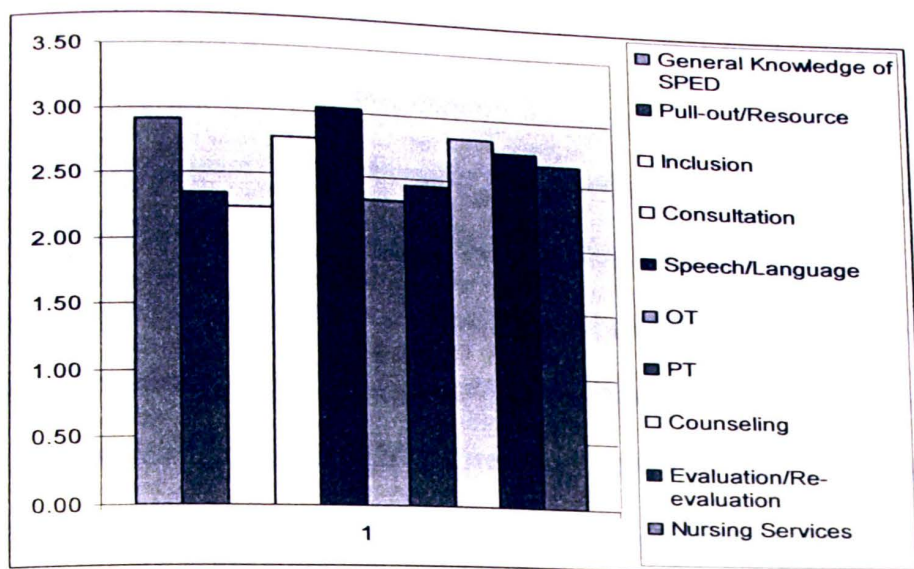


Table 3. Parental knowledge across various service areas

Survey measures also questioned perceived helpfulness of the local education agency and its affect on the acquired knowledge of special education. Out of the total sample size, fifty percent of the population surveyed indicated that the local school system and individual schools were *Somewhat Helpful* in facilitating their knowledge of special education, while 32 percent rated them as *Very Helpful*, and 18 percent as *Not at all Helpful*. Insight into parental input of potential need for “parent-friendly” resources was also determined based on individual responses, as 97.6 percent of respondents indicated that additional parent resources would be beneficial to both themselves, as well as other parents, while 1.6 percent said that the resources would not be helpful. The additional 0.8 percent indicated they were not sure.



## CHAPTER 5

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the following hypotheses: if parents of students receiving special education services, in any capacity, resulted in greater perceived knowledge of special education, if knowledge of parents students receiving special education services was affected by amount of time that their children has received services, and if perceived knowledge varied between services areas. First, with a non significant difference between the means of parents of special education students and parents of general education students, results indicated that both have consistent perceived knowledge of special education and its related services. Second, a non significant difference occurred between the amount of time students spent in special education and the effect on parental knowledge. Parents of students participating in special education for less than one year yielded consistent results, in comparison with those parents of students participating in special education for more that six years. Finally, a measure was conducted to determine the level of significance between the identified perceived knowledge between listed service areas. Results indicated that no significant difference occurred. This finding indicates that parental knowledge of special education is consistent across service areas.

Findings of this study indicate that perceived parental knowledge of special education and its related services are consistent, although a number of factors may be present. Overall findings justify that parents feel that, currently, they have more to learn about special education and that greater knowledge is available in the area. Whether their students are or have been in the past involved in special education, their commensurate

responses indicate uncertainty about all areas of service. According to parent response, the majority of parents, whether or not their student is receiving special education services or not, feel that greater “parent-friendly” would be beneficial to them and other parents. Upon conclusion of this present study, such resources were incorporated in order to assist the Bedford County Department of Education (see Appendix D).

### *Limitations*

It is important to note several limitations of this study. First, the convenience sample was restricted to a limited geographical location. This study only captured a small glimpse into perceived parental knowledge within one middle Tennessee county. In order to obtain results that can be more accurately generalized to the larger population, a more representative sample is necessary. Second, all surveys were administered in the principal investigator’s primary language, English, therefore language barriers may be present, as some respondents may have been unable to complete the survey as it was not provided in their native language. Finally, as the survey was created by the experimenter, prior established data on the reliability and validity of the measure is not available. Despite this number of confines, information gathered from this study supports prior belief that parents may lack full understanding of all aspects of special education and that, as an educational system, more needs to be done to facilitate parent’s knowledge of these services, as parents hold an extremely vital position in assisting students in gaining educational success.

References

- Boyle, J. & Weishaar, M. (2001). *Special education law with cases*. Allyn & Bacon: Boston.
- Callegary, E. (2002). The IDEA's promise unfulfilled: A second look at special education and related services for children with mental health needs after Garret F. *Journal of Health Care Law & Policy*, 5, 164.
- Committee on Children with Disabilities (2000). Provision of educationally-related services for children and adolescents with chronic diseases and disabling conditions. *Pediatrics*, 105, 448.
- Jasper, M. (2000). *Oceana's law for the layperson: The law of special education*. Oceana Publications: New York.
- Leiter, V. & Krauss, M. W. (2004). Claims, barriers, and satisfaction: parents' requests for additional special education services. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 15, 135-147.
- Lovitt, T. & Cushing, S. (1999). Parents of youth with disabilities: Their perceptions of school programs. *Remedial and Special Education*, 20, 134-142.
- Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. (2005). Retrieved March 2, 2005, from <http://www.webster.com>.
- Muscott, H. (2002). Exceptional partnerships: Listening to the voices of families. *Preventing School Failure*, 46, 66-69.
- Smith, D. (2001). *Introduction to special education: Teaching in an age of opportunity*. Allyn & Bacon: Boston.

Tennessee Department of Education, Division of Special Education. (2005). Retrieved February 28, 2005, from <http://www.state.tn.us/education/speced/index.htm>.

Turnbull, A., Turnbull, R., Shank, M., & Leal, D. (1999). *Exceptional lives: Special education in today's schools* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Prentice-Hall, Inc.: New Jersey.



*Appendix A*

Dear Parent:

My name is Kelley Heflin and I am a current graduate student at Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, TN. I am currently pursuing an Education Specialist degree in school psychology. In partial fulfillment of degree requirements, I am completing a field study entitled "Parental Knowledge of Special Education and its Related Services". The success of this study is based on needed information gathered from parents, which is why I am asking for your help. Enclosed you will find a packet of information including an informed consent, which explains the details of the research study, as well as potential risks, benefits, and needed contact information, and a brief survey. I encourage you to carefully read this document before completing any information. Agreement to participate in this study is noted by the completion and return of the following survey. I would like to thank you in advance for your time and consideration in assisting both myself and the field of education with your much-appreciated insight.

With Thanks,

Kelley Heflin

APSU Graduate Student

Informed Consent  
Regarding participation in the research study  
Parental Knowledge of Special Education and its Related Services

*The Purpose of this Research*

The purpose of this study is to determine parental perception of their knowledge of special education services. Data collected within this research study will provide information needed to create parent resources/materials that will be helpful in educating parents about special education and its related services. If you consent to participate, you will be asked to complete a brief survey, taking no more than approximately 10 minutes, indicating demographic information (including whether your child currently, or has previously, received special education services, how long, etc.) and self-evaluation of your perceived knowledge about special education and a number of service areas, along with how instrumental the school system has been in educating you as a parent in those areas.

*Procedures for this Study*

Information gathered from this survey, as well as your participation in this study will remain anonymous. Data collected will remain in a sealed envelope until gathered by the principal investigator. Individual surveys will only be viewed by the principal investigator, Kelley Heflin, for educational use in completion of a final field study for Education Specialist degree completion at Austin Peay State University. All data will be stored in the office of the faculty advisor for a period of three years following the current study.

This study has only limited risks, with psychological distress encountered by personal self-judgment considered a factor. No perceived physical or social harm is present. Submission of a completed survey implies consent. A number of benefits are present; including providing needed information in order to determine areas of need concerning parent knowledge in aspects of special education and subsequent involvement in the creation of resources, which will be used for distribution with the Bedford County Department of Education.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary, and there will be no penalty if you choose not to participate. If any discomfort occurs in relation to completing the survey, you may contact the principal investigator, Kelley Heflin, at (931) 580-0625 or Dr. Stuart Bonnington, faculty advisor, at (931) 221-7234.

# Survey Questions

For the purpose of this study, special education will be defined as the comprehensive set of services that are provided to students eligible for one or a number of remedial services. Individual related services are also listed, in order to gain your perception of knowledge in those areas.

Please complete ALL items as directed.

***Please complete the following information:***

1. Do you have a student currently receiving, or have in the past received, special education services? Please circle one that applies.

**Y**

**N**

2. If yes, how long has/was your student receiving services? \_\_\_\_\_

3. How influential do you feel that the Bedford County Department of Education and/or your child's school has been in helping you understand the process and services of special education? Please circle one that applies.

**Not at all helpful**

**Somewhat helpful**

**Very Helpful**

4. Do you feel that yourself, as well as other parents, would benefit from additional "parent-friendly" materials concerning special education and additional services that may be beneficial to your child's education? Please circle one that applies.

**Y**

**N**

***Please rate the following areas on how comfortable you feel your knowledge base is in the area using the scale provided:***

- 1-Not at all knowledgeable      2-A little knowledgeable      3-Neutral  
4-Mostly knowledgeable      5-Very knowledgeable

1. Generalized knowledge of special education

**1**

**2**

**3**

**4**

**5**

2. Pull-out programming/Resource

**1**

**2**

**3**

**4**

**5**

3. Inclusion

1 2 3 4 5

4. Consultation

1 2 3 4 5

5. Speech/Language Therapy

1 2 3 4 5

6. Occupational Therapy

1 2 3 4 5

7. Physical Therapy

1 2 3 4 5

8. Counseling

1 2 3 4 5

9. Evaluation Reevaluation

1 2 3 4 5

10. Nursing Services

1 2 3 4 5

\*\* Please seal in the provided envelope and return to your child's school by Monday.

May 9<sup>th</sup>





## CONTACT INFORMATION:

## WHAT IS

“Special education is specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including instruction conducted in the classroom.”

*Individuals with Disabilities*

*Education Act (1997)*

BEDFORD COUNTY DEPARTMENT

OF EDUCATION

SPECIAL EDUCATION

MISSY EAKIN, SUPERVISOR

500 MADISON STREET

SHELBYVILLE, TN 37160

(931) 684-3284

[HTTP://WWW.BEDFORDK12TN.COM/](http://www.bedfordk12tn.com/special.html)

[SPECIAL.HTML](http://www.bedfordk12tn.com/special.html)



## SPECIAL

## EDUCATION?

## SPECIAL EDUCATION INVOLVES...

Occupational Therapists

Parents

School Nurses

Students

School Psychologists

School Counselors

Physical Therapists

ALL WORKING TOGETHER!!!

and changing, aspect of our schools today. Society's preconceived idea of special education is slowly fading, so *what is beyond the "pull-out" classes?*

--CONSULTATION: a number of student needs may be met within the general education classroom, with "team-teaching" between the classroom teacher and a special education teacher.

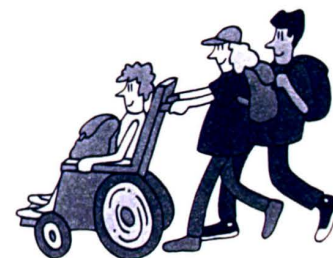
--INCLUSION: students can benefit from receiving services, from the special education instructor, while remaining in their general education classroom.

--OCCUPATIONAL and PHYSICAL THERAPY: students with physical needs or motor difficulties can receive individualized help that can facilitate their learning experience.

specific emotional needs can receive individualized or group counseling within their home schools.

--NURSING SERVICES students with medical needs can receive needed assistance within their home schools, administered by licensed school nurses

--SPEECH/LANGUAGE SERVICES: students with speech and/or language impairments are provided with speech/language therapy on a regular basis, as determined by their individual needs.



COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
Austin Peay State University

GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH APPROVAL FORM

Approval of Proposed

☐ Research Paper (Project)

☐ Thesis

☒ Field Study

Herewith I/we submit this document prepared for

Kelley Heflin

(Name of Student)

(SS#)

on behalf of the

Psychology

(Department)

related to

PSY 6990

(Course Number)

I/we verify that the proposed research has been reviewed and recommend that it be approved. **If the research involves human subjects or animals, I/we attest that appropriate approvals have been secured.**

[Signature]  
Chairperson/Director

4-15-05

Date

[Signature]

Second Committee Member\*

4-15-05

Date

[Signature]

Third Committee Member\*

4-15-05

Date

\*Signatures are required for Theses and Field Studies ONLY.

Approval of Institutional Review Board  
(Necessary for all research studies involving humans or animals.)

Date

Approved by the Dean, College of Graduate Studies

Date

(This form, with a copy of the TITLE PAGE of the approved proposal, should be filed in the office of the College of Graduate Studies before the student registers for research paper (project), thesis, or field study.)

**AUSTIN PEAY STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS**  
Please read the entire application before completing. Students must fill out a  
*Graduate Student Research Approval Form* and attach it to this application.

**TITLE OF PROJECT:**

Parental Knowledge of Special Education and its Related Services

**TITLE ON CONSENT FORM (If different than above):**

Same Title

**FUNDING SOURCE:**

Principal Investigator

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR**

Name:    Kelley Heflin   

Status: Faculty        Staff        Graduate Student   X   Undergraduate Student       

Department:   Education    Phone:  (931) 580-0625  

Mailing Address:    P.O. Box 572 Shelbyville, TN 37162   

Email Address:    Kellee59@aol.com   

**FACULTY SUPERVISOR**

Name:    Dr. Stuart Bonnington    Department   Psychology   

Mailing Address:    APSU P.O. Box 4537   

Phone:   (931) 221-7234    Email address:    bonningtons@apsu.edu



All of the questions below should be answered using lay language. The IRB is comprised of individuals from diverse scientific and nonscientific backgrounds. You should avoid all jargon and assume that IRB members have no prior knowledge on the research topic, theoretical or methodological approaches, or measurement techniques or instruments. The best way to avoid unnecessary delays is to provide the IRB with as much information about your study as possible. **You will need to attach a copy of all demographic forms, survey instruments, and other data collection systems.** If you are unable to attach the above please contact the Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs for advice. It is important to remember that informed consent is a process not a document. Informed consent begins with recruitment and ends only after a study is completed.

1. **Describe the purpose of this study.** Be sure to clearly indicate the research question being asked.

The purpose of this study is to gain information regarding perceived parental knowledge of special education and its related services, in assessing potential need for greater parent information in the area. The question posed is whether or not the school system (Bedford County, TN) is currently meeting parent perceived needs in ensuring they are provided needed resources in facilitating the understanding of special education. In turn, based on study results, in collaboration with the local school system "parental friendly" information will be gathered and provided to parents involved and or interested in the special education process.

2. **Briefly describe the research that has already been conducted in this area.** The IRB needs to understand how this study adds to the knowledge on this topic in order to be able to judge the risks and benefits to participants.

A number of research studies have been conducted in gathering parental satisfaction with special education and the services provided for the students, however no information found in referencing this study include parent feedback on how comfortable they feel about their current knowledge of the services that their children is/can receive. Also, information regarding those parents of students not currently receiving services is not included, although their students could potentially need/be eligible for some type of special service in order to ensure their academic success.

3. **Describe the population from which your research sample will be drawn.** Be sure to indicate if subjects are from a vulnerable population such as infants, children, pregnant women, mentally disabled persons, prisoners, employees, students, economically or educationally challenged persons etc...). What additional safeguards will be included to protect the rights and welfare of these participants?

The research sample will be one of convenience, including parents of K-12 students within the Bedford County school system. These parents will be of both general education and special education students, in order to provide a cross-sectional analysis. As the proposed study involves survey research, participants will be able to complete information without perceived influence of an examiner. It is the goal of the principal investigator that all data collected and the participant pool is kept confidential, and all information should be kept anonymous unless desired by the participant.

4. **Explain the inclusion and exclusion criteria that will be used (e.g., age, race, gender, language, academic abilities, academic major, pre-existing conditions, etc....).**



The study is based on a convenience sample and no exclusionary data is applicable. All parents are invited to participate in the study regardless of any demographic factors. Potential confounding factors, such as language barrier and academic impairments (such as illiteracy) may create exclusionary aspects, although not intended as part of the proposed study.

5. **Indicate how many potential participants will be approached.** The APIRB needs to know the maximum number that might be asked to participate, NOT the minimum number needed to adequately ask the research question. It is recommended that you choose a number higher than you expect to need because once the number is approved you will need to apply to the IRB for permission to recruit additional participants. Do not choose an unnecessarily large number however, because sample size may affect the risk/benefit ratio decision that the IRB must make. Please break down your maximum numbers by category (e.g., child, adult, male, female, depressed, non depressed etc...) such that the board can evaluate the risks for different types of participants.

Potential participants will include parents of K-12 students. Packets will be sent to approximately 500 parents in order to ensure an equal representation between grade levels and schools. Also, with this number it is the goal of the experimenter to gather enough of a participant pool so that an adequate sample size is found to answer the research question. Potential participants are not limited by gender, race, or income. All parents are eligible to participate.

6. **Describe how participants will be identified, approached, recruited and consented.** Who will make the first contact and when and where will it occur. All materials used to recruit participants need to be submitted for review (e.g., media advertisements, brochures, email, poster/signs or sign-up sheets, etc...). If verbal announcements will be made for recruitment purposes please provide a script of how the study will be described or a list of the points that will be made.

Information (informational letter, informed consent, survey) from the experimenter will be sent home via each child's local school. This information will be sent upon IRB approval and a deadline date for survey return will be included at that time. Consent for participation will be determined by the participants' completion and return of the enclosed survey, as documented on the informed consent.

7. **Specifically identify all individuals who will describe the study to potential participants. Also, specifically identify all individuals who will obtain consent from potential participants.**

Do these individual(s) have a dual relationship with potential participants (e.g., instructor, mentor, employer, caregiver, etc...) that might create the potential for the perception or actual existence of coercion or undue influence? What procedures will you put in place to reduce or eliminate potential/perceived coercive situations?

The principal investigator and the faculty advisor are the only ones involved in providing information regarding this study to the participant, via descriptive information sent home and any potential contact created based on parent follow-up, based on provided contact information. Dual relationships could be possible, as the principal investigator is currently completing an internship with the Bedford County school system and has contact with parents. It is the goal of the principal investigator to keep participants anonymous in order to prevent effects of potential coercion or influence.

8. **Describe your research procedures.** We need to know all of the procedures that will occur, but in particular we need a description of what the participants will experience. For example, a



description of the instructions that will be given to them, activities in which they will engage, the length and timing of involvement, and the circumstances under which they will provide data (i.e., group assessments, one-on-one interview, videotaping, audio taping, phone calls, spending time in an uncomfortable position, etc...).

Participants will receive the cover letter, informed consent, and the parental knowledge survey that is sent home from their child's school. The participants will be asked to carefully read the included informed consent and then, based on their approval, voluntarily complete the survey, seal it in the included envelope, and return it to their child's school. Instructions on the survey ask the parents to complete all items. The length of time required to complete the survey is minimal, no more than 10 minutes, although no time constraint is outlined. The study is not believed to be uncomfortable for the participant and after analysis all information gathered from the surveys will be destroyed, in order to ensure anonymity.

9. **If this study involves deception, describe and justify its use.** Deception will require that subjects be debriefed following data collection. The purposes of the debriefing are to explain the true purpose of the study, reduce any negative consequences participants may experience from participation and to provide a clear, easy opportunity for withdrawal of consent. You must include a copy of the debriefing statement in your application.

Deception will not be used in this study.

10. **Describe any form of compensation that participants will receive (e.g., money, extra credit, toys, food, etc...).** If so, please describe amount, type, when they will receive it. If withdrawal from the study will change the amount or type of compensation please describe how (i.e., prorated, elimination, etc...). Note that academic extra credit can only be awarded at the discretion of the instructor, not the principal investigator.

No compensation will be provided for participation in the study.

11. **Explain if this research might entail psychological, legal, physical, or social harm or discomfort to the subjects.** What steps have been taken to minimize these risks? What provisions have been made to insure that appropriate facilities and professional attention necessary for the health and safety of the subjects are available and will be utilized? How will the participants be informed of these procedures? If an information sheet describing these resources will be provided to participants, please submit. If university or community professionals agree to provide their services, please submit a letter of cooperation from the individuals/agencies that describes the agreement.

The perceived risks of this proposed study appear minimal. No physical contact between investigator and participant is necessary, and as information is to remain confidential no potential social harm (such as intimidation or ridicule) is foreseen. Discomfort is not believed to be apparent in this study, as each participant is able to complete needed data at their own convenience without perceived pressure. Psychological factors are kept to a minimum; however self-judgment is needed to complete individual rating of one's knowledge which could result in negative thoughts of inadequacy, etc. as it relates to their children's education.

12. **Describe how the potential benefits of this activity to the participants and humankind**

**outweigh any possible risks.** This opinion is justified for the following reasons:

Participation in this study creates needed information that is not readily provided throughout the local education agency (Bedford County). Based on data collected, analysis of needed resources will be identified and "user-friendly" information will be provided to parents. This information will ensure that parents gain more insight into the special education process, the related services provided, and individuals/agencies that they can contact for support and education.

13. **Describe how the confidentiality of data about participants will be protected.** What steps and procedures will be used? How (hard copy, electronic, etc...) and where (e.g., locked file cabinet in PIs campus office) will data be stored? If data will be destroyed please indicate when and how.

Information about the study (informed consent, surveys) will be provided to parents in a sealed envelope via their child's school, with other daily information sent home. Hard copies of the surveys will be returned to the principal investigator in a sealed, provided envelope to the child's school and will be collected at a centralized place. No personal information (name, address, phone number, etc.) will be asked, and after data analysis and project completion the principal investigator will destroy all surveys.

14. **If data will be anonymous, explain how this anonymity will be achieved.** Note that anonymity requires that at no time can the data be connected to the participant by anyone involved in the research, even the PI. If data will be anonymous, explain how and where the consent document will be stored.

Consent will be sent to the potential participants with consent contingent on their completion of the survey. No signed copies will be retrieved as it is the goal of the investigator to keep parents anonymous, so as they do not feel intimidation in any way in taking part in the study.

15. **Explain how any data collected relate to illegal activities.**

No data collection within this survey is related to any illegal activities or disclosure of such.



16. Please indicate by marking Y(es) or N(o) whether the attached informed consent document includes each of the following elements as required by the Code of Federal Regulations: Title 45, Part 46.116.

- ☒ Y ☐ N A statement that the study involves research,
- ☒ Y ☐ N an explanation of the duration of the subjects participation,
- ☒ Y ☐ N a description of the procedures to be used;
- ☒ Y ☐ N A description of any reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts to the subject;
- ☒ Y ☐ N A description of any benefits to the subject or others which can be reasonably expected from the research; (Note: compensation is not a benefit)
- ☒ Y ☐ N A statement describing the extent, if any, to which confidentiality of records identifying the subject will be maintained;
- ☒ Y ☐ N An explanation of whom to contact for answers to pertinent questions about the research and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research related injury to the subject; (Note: should include APIRB, PI and if applicable, students' faculty sponsor)
- ☒ Y ☐ N A statement that participation is voluntary, refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled, and the subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled. (Note: this statement should be written in language at an appropriate level for the subjects in your study).

The following may or may not apply your study. Please carefully read and mark each one Y(es) or N(o).

- ☒ Y ☐ N An explanation of whom to contact in the event of a research related injury to the subject;
- ☒ N ☐ Y A disclosure of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to the subject;
- ☒ N ☐ Y For research involving more than minimal risk, an explanation as to whether any compensation and an explanation as to whether any medical treatments are available if injury occurs and, if so, what they consist of, or where further information may be obtained;
- ☒ N ☐ Y A statement that the particular treatment or procedure may involve risks to the subject which are currently unforeseeable;
- ☒ N ☐ Y Anticipated circumstances under which the subject's participation may be terminated by the investigator without regard to the subject's consent;
- ☒ N ☐ Y Any additional costs to the subject that may result from participation in the research; (Note: This is not limited to monetary costs)
- ☒ N ☐ Y The consequences of a subject's decision to withdraw from the research and procedures for orderly termination of participation by the subject;
- ☒ N ☐ Y A statement that significant new findings developed during the course of the research which may relate to the subject's willingness to continue participation will be provided to the subject; and
- ☒ N ☐ Y The approximate number of subjects in the study.

**If your study includes children please provide the committee with information about how you will obtain the child's assent to participate.** Children older than 12 are expected to be provided the opportunity to sign to indicate their assent to participate. Children 7-12 should be provided with a written document, which may or may not also be read. Depending on the research to be conducted children 6 years and younger may be read an assent script (please submit). In addition to your procedures to obtain assent, please indicate what dissent behaviors will lead you to decide a child is not providing or has withdrawn his/her assent to participate. Note: child assent can be solicited only after parental consent has been obtained.

This proposed study does not involve children.

8. **If you are requesting a waiver of the documentation of informed consent please explain how you would meet the requirements of 45 CFR 46.117.**

No waiver is needed. Informed consent is attached.

I have read the Austin Peay State University Policies and Procedures on Human Research (00:002) and Research Misconduct (99:013) and agree to abide by them. I also agree to report to the Austin Peay Institutional Review Board any unexpected events related to this study. I also agree to receive approval before implementing any changes in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Faculty Supervisor's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

April 29, 2005

Kelley Heflin  
P.O. Box 572  
Shelbyville, TN 37162

Dear Ms. Heflin

RE: Your application regarding study number 05-045: Parental Knowledge of Special Education  
And its Related Services (Dr. Bonnington)

Thank you for your recent submission. We appreciate your cooperation with the human research review process. I have reviewed your request for expedited approval of the new study listed above. This type of study qualifies for expedited review under FDA and NIH (Office for Protection from Research Risks) regulations.

**The following further information and/or changes are required:**

Item #13, #14: The University mandates that data should be stored for a minimum of 3 years in the Chair's office.

Once these changes have been made you may continue your study. I have approved your application through one calendar year. You must obtain consent from all subjects, but signed written consent is not required. This approval is subject to APSU Policies and Procedures governing human subject research.

You are granted permission to conduct your study as described in your application effective immediately. The study is subject to continuing review on or before April 29, 2006, unless closed before that date. Please visit [www.apsu.edu](http://www.apsu.edu) and select the IRB link to find the forms to report when your study has been completed and to request an annual review of a continuing study. Please submit the appropriate form prior to April 29, 2006.

Please note that any changes to the study as approved must be promptly reported and approved. Some changes may be approved by expedited review; others require full board review. Please contact me at (221-7415; fax 221-7641; email [pinderc@apsu.edu](mailto:pinderc@apsu.edu)) if you have any questions or require further information.

Again, thank you for your cooperation with the APSU IRB and the human research review process. Best wishes for a successful study!

Sincerely,

Charles A. Pinder, Ph.D.  
Chair, Austin Peay Institutional Review Board  
Cc Dr. Bonnington