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Effects of Parental Attendance at Individualized Education Plan Meetings on Students' Benchmark Test Scores

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Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Sydney Renee' Butler

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

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by

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Ed S, Lincoln Memorial University, 2010

M.TH, Liberty University, 2013

MS, SUNY College at Buffalo, 1993

BS, Michigan State University, 1983

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

May 2024

Abstract

The problem addressed through this study was the potential effects of the lack of parent participation at individualized education plan (IEP) meetings on students' achievement. The research question in this study examined the relationship between parents of high school students with disabilities (SWD) attendance at annual IEP meetings and students' test scores on Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) Growth reading and math benchmark test scores versus scores of parents who did not attend. The difference was examined between NWEA MAP Growth reading and math scores for 11th grade parents who attended the annual IEP meeting and those who did not attend. An ex post facto design was used to examine records of parents' attendance and non-attendance at IEP meetings along with benchmark test scores from the NWEA Map Growth reading and math scores. The theoretical framework was Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model of parental involvement. Independent samples *t* tests were used for the data analysis. Although there was a slight increase in the benchmark scores of the SWD whose parent attended the annual IEP, the difference was not significant based on the results. The results suggest that parent attendance at IEP meetings was not a significant factor in stronger achievement test scores for SWD. This study may positively affect social change by supporting the examination of other factors that might affect benchmark achievement test scores among SWD.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this labor of love to my son Robert who inspired me to enter the field of special education. I would also like to dedicate this study to the thousands of students with disabilities that I have taught over the years at the middle school and high school level in public schools and at the youth detention center and the many students at the post-secondary level that I taught at Grand Canyon University who were studying to enter the field of special education.

Acknowledgments

I would first like to say thank you to God for leading me by His Holy Spirit through this process. Thank you, Lord! I would also like to thank my biological and church family members for their words of encouragement and prayers, throughout this lengthy process. Thank you, mom, and Jerry. Thank you, Dr. Karen Clark and Dr. Peter Ross, for your consistent support and words of encouragement. Through your firm but caring direction, I was encouraged to keep going and finish strong!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Parents of students with disabilities (SWD) are one of the essential members of the individual education program (IEP) team. There are two types of IEP meetings that parents may be required to attend. The first is the initial meeting, which is held at the onset of the student being diagnosed with a disability to establish the proper programming. The initial IEP meeting is a foundational part of the IEP process, and parents are encouraged to attend (Hammond & Ingalls, 2017). The second is the annual review meeting that is held on a yearly basis to evaluate the progress of the student and to adjust special education services if needed (Georgia Department of Education [GaDOE], 2022).

Although the guidelines have been established for parents' role on the IEP team, parents sometimes fail to attend the annual IEP meeting (GaDOE, 2022). The implications for SWD when parents do not attend annual IEP meetings can be significant. Each member of the team brings important insight into the student's capabilities based on their assessments, observations, and professional knowledge. Parents possess valuable information about the SWD that can add to the team's ability to develop an IEP that gives an overall picture of who the student is, and the services needed to achieve a level of success in school. For instance, benchmark testing is conducted frequently throughout the school year to determine students' progress toward achieving mastery of grade level standards. The necessity of SWD receiving the proper accommodations for testing, including benchmark testing, stems from the collaborative efforts of the IEP team. However, currently in the state of Georgia there is a significant difference in the benchmark test scores of SWD and non-disabled students (GaDOE, 2022).

The purpose of this study was to determine if a difference exists in MAP Growth reading 6+ and Growth math 6+ scores between 11th grade SWD whose parents attended the annual IEP meeting and students whose parents did not attend the meetings. This study will fill a gap in literature on the effects of parents' non-attendance at IEP meetings on benchmark testing. It may also positively affect social change by encouraging school leaders to convey to parents what their role is on the IEP team and how vital their input is at IEP meetings to the success of their child. The first chapter of this study will include a brief history of parent advocacy, the problem identified, the study's purpose, the theoretical framework, the study's nature, and other pertinent information.

Background

At the inception of special education, parents were at the forefront of advocating for SWD. When *Brown vs. The Board of Education* was passed, parents fought to ensure that SWD had the same rights and quality education as non-disabled students by citing the principles included in the Brown case (Mitchell et al., 1998). The *Brown vs. The Board of Education* case prompted the emergence of many special education parent advocacy groups (Turnbull, 1993). When the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (EAHCA) was passed, it further extended the rights of SWD by including the right to testing, evaluations, to be placed in the least restrictive environment (LRE), due process, to have parental involvement, and to receive a free and appropriate education. In 2001, The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was enacted to hold schools accountable for standardized test scores of students and to impose consequences for schools not meeting performance targets for adequate yearly progress in the areas of test

scores and participation rates (Whitney & Candelaria, 2017). In 2015, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law by President Barack Obama to replace NCLB. The provisions included in ESSA are to ensure that all students and schools are successful. Some of the provisions included are that student be taught with high academic standards, that accountability measures for low performing schools be in place, and that equity exists for high-need and disadvantaged students (ESSA).

Further, principles for ensuring that parents are active participants in the special education process are outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). Included in this law are the parents' right to be involved in the decision-making process of all services related to the SWD and development of the IEP, which includes accommodations that aids in ensuring equity for SWD in the classroom and testing. The testing accommodations that are agreed upon in annual IEP meetings are important since SWD are required to take part in the same test that their non-disabled peers take as mandated by federal and state law (GaDOE, 2022). When parents attend annual IEP meetings to help establish proper testing accommodations for SWD, this ensures they are equipped with the support needed to help them succeed. The importance of conducting this study stems from the absence of parents from annual IEP meetings, which could leave a gap in the student's programming, particularly as it relates to a SWD receiving the proper accommodations for benchmark testing.

Problem Statement

The problem addressed through this study is the potential effects of the lack of parent participation at IEP meetings on students' achievement. The National Center for

Education Statistics (NCES) reported in 2021 that 7.3 million students (about twice the population of Oklahoma) are currently being served in special education, which equates to approximately 15% of the total population of students being educated in the K-12 public school system in the United States. According to the information provided by NCES, annual IEP meetings will be held for each of the 7.3 million students identified as having a disability and parents are strongly encouraged to attend. For SWD, parental involvement in special education is important (Kirksey et al., 2022). However, parents of SWD are not always in attendance at annual IEP meetings. The percentage of parents who attended annual IEP meetings across the state of Georgia during the 2020-2021 school years was 76%. In fact, Georgia's Fulton County school district reported 79.9% participation of parents of SWD at annual IEP meetings, Newton County schools reported 45.1%, Dekalb County school's percentage of participation was 40.1%, and Chatham County schools reported that 83.2% of their parents attended annual IEP meetings (GaDOE, 2022).

For decades, parental involvement has been identified as a major factor for student success (Carlson et al., 2020; Epstein, 1983; Fullan, 1985; Pomerantz & Monti, 2015; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005; Wang, 2014; Wilder, 2015). This is the case when parents of SWD attend IEP meetings (Newman, 2005; Hirano & Rowe, 2016). SWD whose parents attended IEP meetings had overall higher-grade point averages and grades in English/language arts and math than those whose parents did not attend IEP meetings. However, when parents do not attend IEP meetings the academic outcome is not favorable (Poponi, 2009)

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate the difference in NWEA MAP benchmark achievement test scores in the areas of Growth reading 6+ and Growth math 6+ scores between 11th grade SWD whose parents attended the annual IEP meeting versus SWD whose parents did not attend IEP meetings. An ex post facto approach was used to address the problem. Records from parents' attendance at the annual IEP meetings were examined along with data from high school benchmark test for 11th grade SWD during the 2022–2023 school year at a local high school.

Research Question and Hypothesis

The research question that was used to guide this study emanated from the problem statement: What is the relationship between parents of high school SWD attendance at annual IEP meetings and students' test scores on the NWEA MAP Growth reading (6+) and math (6+) benchmark test scores versus scores from SWD whose parents did not attend annual IEP meetings?

H₀: There is no significant relationship between benchmark test scores on the NWEA MAP Growth reading (6+) and Growth math (6+) assessments and parents' attendance at annual IEP meetings between parent's attendance versus non-attendance at annual IEP meetings.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between students' test scores on the NWEA MAP Growth reading (6+) and Growth math (6+) benchmark test scores and parents' attendance at annual IEP meetings.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework used for this study is Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995) model of the parental process. This theory posits that student academic outcome is related to parental involvement. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theoretical work is frequently used in studies addressing various levels of parental involvement because it provides a model for understanding parents involvement or lack of involvement in their child's school and how it affects academic achievement in students. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler outlined five levels of parental involvement to answer three key questions about why parents do or do not involve themselves with their child's school; what activities parents participate in when they are involved; and how parental involvement affects academic achievement. This theoretical model provided valuable structure to this research study that examined parental involvement and how it affects students' benchmark test scores, which are often used as measurements of academic achievement.

Nature of the Study

This quantitative study was conducted to examine the relationship between attendance at IEP meetings by parents of SWD and benchmark test scores using an ex post facto research design. Ex post facto designs are commonly used when the research is focused on examining the relationship between two variables obtained from existing data (Ugwuanyi et al., 2022). Existing data were examined in this study. The independent variables in this study was parents' attendance or non-attendance at IEP meetings, and the dependent variables were NWEA MAP Growth reading 6+ scores and Growth math 6+ benchmark test scores. The school site used had about 175 SWD during the 2022–2023

school year. The benchmark test scores from this population of SWD was used in this study. Permission was obtained from the administrator of the school where the study took place and the administrator at the school district to obtain school-based IEP meeting parent attendance reports and NWEA Map test scores in Growth reading (6+) and Growth math (6+) for 11th grade SWD for the 2022–2023 school year. Convenience sampling was used to group parents based on their attendance or non-attendance at IEP meetings. This process aligned with the theoretical model of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s (1995, 2005) model of the parental process, the problem and purpose statements, and the research question in this study in that all are focused on how parents’ attendance or non-attendance at IEP meetings affects benchmark test scores.

Definitions

Accommodations: A modification in an assignment or test to allow students with disabilities to have a fair chance of succeeding in the same task that their non-disabled peers are participating in (Kern et al., 2019).

Assessments: The process of obtaining measurable data on the knowledge, strengths, and weaknesses of a student (Poehner, 2007).

Benchmark test: Assessments that provide information about how well students are meeting educational standards. Benchmark test also provides teachers with information on how to adjust instruction (Herman & Baker, 2005).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that was signed by President Barack Obama ensure that all students have equal opportunity.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): An act that was instituted to ensure that all students who have a disability have access to a free and appropriate education that includes services needed to meet their individual needs (IDEA, 2024).

Individual education program (IEP): Serves as a documented plan to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Slade et al., 2018).

MAP Growth Assessment: Measures the achievement and growth of elementary to high school students in reading, math, and science (NWEA, 2009).

Parental involvement: The National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE, 2010) defines parental involvement as the collaborative efforts of families of schools and community agencies to support the learning of their child.

Proficient learner's range: Learners who score in the proficient range on the Georgia Milestone exams are those who have a good understanding of the content on this grade level and have mastered the skills to move to the next level (GaDOE, 2022).

Assumptions

There were a few assumptions that were implicit in this study. The first is if schools kept accurate records on the number of parents that attended annual IEP meetings and the number of annual meetings held during the 2022–2023 school year. The second is that the records regarding parent attendance at IEP meetings are accurate. This was valuable information that related to the independent variable in this study. The third assumption was that all SWD required to test participated in the 2022–2023 administration of the NWEA MAP reading and math test, since it is a requirement that all

students in the district take the test. The fourth assumption was that SWD who have testing accommodations documented in their IEP's were given the same accommodations for testing in the 2022–2023 MAP administration to ensure that they had equity in testing.

Scope and Delimitations

This study was designed to investigate the difference in NWEA MAP benchmark achievement test scores in the areas of Growth reading 6+ and Growth math 6+ scores between 11th grade SWD whose parents attended the annual IEP meeting versus those whose parents did not attend, using an ex post facto research design. This study was carried out to address the fact that approximately 30% of parents of 11th grade SWD do not attend the annual IEP meetings in a large southeastern U.S. city school district (GaDOE, 2022). This study was limited to parents of SWD whose child is being served in the consultative, small group, collaborative, co-taught and supportive instructional settings, who attended and did not attend the annual IEP meeting during the 2022–2023 school year at an urban high school in a large southeastern U.S. city.

Additionally, the term *SWD* is generally confined to students with learning and behavioral problems. Scores from students with significant cognitive deficits were not included in this study. The population in this study was limited to parents' annual IEP meeting attendance in the 11th grade at a high school in the southeastern school district in the United States who are cognitively able to participate in the NWEA MAP Reading (6+) and math (6+) testing. The rationale for this decision is the fact that students who fall under these exceptionalities are most times required to take alternative assessments.

Limitations

There are several limitations to conducting an ex post facto study. The independent and dependent variables have already occurred in ex post facto studies. As such, only the degree of significance among the two variables are discussed in this study. Ex post facto studies do not allow for random assignment; therefore, in this study, the population of parents chosen were only those who have a SWD in the school where the study is taking place.

There may have been personal bias in the researcher regarding this study's outcome. I am a parent of a student who previously received special education services and was active in my son's special education process. I attended special education meetings, collaborated with those providing care to my son regarding the appropriate services he needed, educated myself about special education, and knew my rights as a parent of a SWD. My son achieved success by graduating from high school and college, which may have been attributed to my attendance at IEP meetings. My bias comes from my belief that there is no excuse for parents not making some attempt to be present at the annual IEP meeting for their child. If barriers exist to attending in person, parents can attend via phone, and since Covid-19, online platforms.

Significance

This study is significant in that it may bring to light information about parents who attend IEP meetings and those that do not attend and how the outcomes may have impacted benchmark scores for SWD during the 2022–2023 school year. School leaders may take steps toward conveying to parents of SWD the impact of their involvement on

their child's benchmark test scores. The state of Georgia benchmark scores for SWD is far behind their non-disabled peers (GaDOE, 2022). While some studies have addressed the topic of parental involvement and parent's role in student academic outcomes, few have implemented quantitative methods to test the assumption. It has been hypothesized that a positive collaborative relationship between home and school is associated with positive outcomes for students (Kovacs et al., 2022). This study may help reinforce the impact of parent involvement on their child's achievement.

Summary

In Chapter 1 an introduction to the topic being studied was presented, along with the problem statement, the purpose statement, research questions, and the theoretical framework. In the local school district, there are many parents who do not attend annual IEP meetings. Research has shown that parents can play a significant role in ensuring that the IEP team has information about the SWD interactions in the home environment and other pertinent facts that will assist them in making accurate placement and programming decisions. This chapter also addressed the assumptions, limitations, and significance of the study. Chapter 2 will provide an exhaustive review of the literature addressing the problem statement and the literature search strategies used. An in-depth presentation of the theoretical framework for this study is also presented.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Equal learning opportunities for SWD is an important tenet in U.S. education (Tefera, 2019). Although SWD are expected to meet the same standards as their non-disabled peers in the classroom and for benchmark testing, they require an added level of support to be successful (Kovacs et al., 2022). The support comes in the form of accommodations and should be discussed thoroughly in annual IEP meetings. Accommodations change the way class assignments and tests are administered (Kern et al., 2019). The establishment of the proper accommodations in the classroom and during benchmark testing allows for a greater chance of SWD performing well. Their attendance helps ensure parents support the education process and provide ongoing encouragement to their children for academic success. In the *Doug C. v. Hawaii* case, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the school did not do everything that they could to include the parent in the IEP meeting and that parents are the best representation of their child and provide valuable information to the development of the IEP (Doug C. v. Hawaii Department of Education, 2013).

Important guidelines have been outlined in the IDEA (2004) regarding the rights of parents to make decisions about their child's special education services and their attendance at IEP meetings. IDEA also mandates that school personnel contact parents to schedule meetings at times that are convenient for them and that an interpreter attends the meeting if needed. The intent is for parents and schools to be equal partners in the special education decision making process (Murray et al., 2018). Nonetheless, many parents do not attend their child's annual IEP meetings. For SWD, parental involvement in special

education is important (Kirksey et al., 2022). SWD receive services that are tailored to their individual needs when parents and schools collaborate at annual IEP meetings. The problem addressed through this study was the potential effects of the lack of parent participation at IEP meetings on students' achievement. The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate the difference in MAP reading and math scores between 11th grade SWD whose parents attended the annual IEP meeting and those whose parents did not attend.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search for this study began with breaking down key concepts in the title of the dissertation into a general search on parental involvement, IEP meetings and benchmark test scores. Searches in scholarly journals, book chapters, dissertations, and educational reports over the past 10 years were done using synonyms to the terms *IEP meeting*, *parental involvement*, and *benchmark test scores to yield special education meetings*, *parental engagement*, and *interim assessments*. More specific searches were further conducted by combining the key concepts from the title such as *parents and IEP meetings*, *parents' attendance at IEP meetings*, *IEP meetings and benchmark test*, *parental involvement and benchmark test scores*, and *parents' non-attendance at IEP meetings*. Searches were conducted to access scholarly journal articles and book chapters over the past 5 years in databases such as Thoreau, ERIC (ProQuest), Education Research Complete (EBSCO), and Galileo.

Theoretical Foundation

A theoretical foundation emanates from theories that currently exist (Rocco &

Plakhotnik, 2009). The principles contained in the theory of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995) model of the parental involvement process were the theoretical foundation for this study. Whether parents attend parent-teacher conferences, sporting events, volunteer at school functions, assist teachers in the classroom, or attend special education meetings, all are labeled parental involvement. Parental involvement can be demonstrated in several different ways as outlined in the model of the parental involvement process. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model brought to light reasons why parents involve themselves in their child's education and how their child is impacted by their involvement.

In this theory five levels of parental involvement exist. In 2005, the model was reorganized in the first two levels' constructs (Walker et al., 2005). The 2005 reorganized model of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Model of the Parental Process includes information about what motivates parents to involve themselves in their child's education, which is outlined in five levels. Level 1 includes the parents' understanding of the role they are to play in their child's life, a parent's motivational beliefs or confidence in their ability to help their child to be successful in school, and how they perceive invitations received by the school to become involved. Level 2 describes the several types of parental involvement activities that parents may involve themselves in. Level 3 explains the process in which parental involvement influences student achievement, and Level 4 explores the connection between parent and school. The model concludes with Level 5, which comprises student outcomes and students' sense of self-efficacy (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler).

The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theoretical model has drawn support from other studies that have supported the idea that academic achievement can be a direct result of parental involvement (Jeynes, 2007; McNeal, 2015). In 2009, the Epstein model of parental involvement was developed to further bring insight into the role of parents in their child's schooling. The Epstein model is composed of six areas that parents assume to encourage their child's academic achievement in school: positive home conditions, collaboration between parents and students about classwork, parents' involvement in the school environment, educational activities at home, collaborative decision making between home and school, and partnerships between parents, school, and the community.

Another theory used to examine the interactions of parents in various environments and their influence on the student's lives is Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological system theory. This theory examines a child's life process in their relationships at home, in school and among their peers. According to the theory, these environments influence how academically successful a child is in school. The ecological system theory states that a person's environment is divided into five systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem, with the microsystem being the most influential and composed of the students' closest relationships.

Although both Epstein's (2009) model of parental involvement and Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological system theory have components of evaluating parental involvement and academic achievement, the theory of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995) model of the parental involvement process best supported this study in

examining the effect of parental attendance at IEP meetings on benchmark test scores. Although Hoover–Dempsey and Sandler’s model of the parental involvement process is composed of five levels, attention was paid to Levels 1–3 of this model for this study. Level 1 deals with a parent’s understanding of their role as parent, Level 2 encompasses the types of parental activities they will be involved in, and Level 3 shows how parental involvement affects student achievement.

Several studies have incorporated the principles of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s (1995) model of the parental involvement process. Williams-Johnson and Gonzalez-DeHass (2022) used this theory in a study to determine what precipitates behaviors to promote parental involvement, and parental role construction. Hirano et al. (2016) utilized the concepts in the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model to explore factors in parental involvement of SWD in high school special education. Grace and Gerdes (2019) also used Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s model to conduct a review of the parental involvement of Latino parents.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variables

The implications of parental involvement on the educational success of children has been a topic of discussion in school reform for many years (Comer, 1992). When parents are involved in their child’s schooling the educational outcome for the child is better (Domina, 2005; Mueller, 1995, 1998; Sui-Chu & Williams, 1996). Parental involvement is initiated in many ways such as parents’ interaction with their child’s school in the form of volunteering, classroom helper, sports activities assistant, attendance at parent-teacher conferences, or a member of the Parent Teachers Association

(PTA). Parental involvement may include the connections that parents have with their children at home and their interactions with their child's school, and teachers (Hill, 2022). Parental involvement for parents of SWD should include attendance at IEP meetings and advocating for the proper services for their child, collaborating with professionals that are providing services to their child, and acting as a decision-maker in their child's education.

Parental Involvement in School

Researchers have different views on what constitutes parental involvement. According to Harris and Robinson (2023), the concept of parental involvement has yet to be defined. But Hango (2007) revealed that parental involvement involves parents' time with their children. Hoover Dempsey and Sandler (1995) highlighted that parental involvement starts with the parent making a conscious decision to be involved. The theoretical framework highlights beliefs about parental involvement and how the school's environment determines the level of involvement parents will have. Epstein (2010) outlined the meaning of parental involvement from a unique perspective involving partnerships between the school, family, and community. Further, academic socialization is another area of parental involvement (Hill et al., 2018). This concept highlights how families communicate their expectations to the child, are fully involved in their educational process, and support their future endeavors. Additionally, many studies on parental involvement and children's academic achievement have their foundation in the experiences of general education students and their parents (Jeynes, 2011a). In 2013, Child Trends reported that parental involvement demonstrates a parent's participation and

commitment to the school and their child by volunteering, attending school meetings, and participating on a committee. Several studies have noted that parents are more apt to become involved when there is a positive relationship between home and school (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Green et al., 2007).

Parents' early involvement in their child's schooling is linked to academic success (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2005). Though some researchers did not find a positive correlation between parental involvement and academic success (Robinson & Harris, 2014), the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (2006) reported that students are likely to have academic success and higher test scores when parents are involved in their education. A positive relationship has been shown between parental involvement and academic success regardless of the type of parental involvement or the grade level (Wilder, 2014). Parental involvement has resulted in higher reading, math, and standardized test scores. Research has also documented that parental involvement may positively affect children's social-emotional competence, which may foster academic achievement (Pomerantz et al., 2007; Sheridan et al., 2019).

Parents are instrumental in shaping their child's actions, attitudes, and behaviors in their early years of school. When children can successfully transition into the K-12 level, the course is being set for academic success throughout their life (Boyle & Benner, 2020). Parental beliefs about their child's transition into kindergarten and the skills needed to show school readiness may influence how they choose to support them (Boyle & Benner, 2020). As children enter the upper elementary level of school, parental involvement continues to be an essential component of academic success for students. A

national longitudinal study conducted by Keith et al. (1993) of 21,814 eighth-grade students and parents found that parental involvement profoundly impacts eighth-grade students' academic success. Other study results suggest that parents' desire for their child's education dramatically influences the achievement of eighth-grade students (Singh et al., 1995). The benefits of parents modeling or reinforcing positive school-related behaviors may yield positive academic outcomes (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995).

In contrast, parental involvement is less evident at the secondary level of a student's education (Wright, 2009). Researchers have documented that parental involvement declines as students' progress toward high school (Seginer, 2006; Spera, 2009). Parents of high school students' primary focus is on career aspirations, strategies for learning, and preparations for college (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Although there are many school-based forms of parental involvement at the elementary and secondary school level, this study specifically focused on parents of SWD at the secondary level and how their attendance at IEP meetings affects benchmark test scores.

Parental Involvement in Special Education

Parental involvement has been deemed essential for all students, but it is necessary for the millions of students diagnosed with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD; Ghandour et al., 2019). Kelty and Wakabayashi (2020) provided insight into how parental involvement at school improves students' opportunities to be successful. The study aimed to determine levels of parental involvement in school from the perspectives of parents, educators, and the community. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model

was used in this study. It was noted that educational success for SWD can be improved when families and schools collaborate to ensure that opportunities to succeed are in place. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model was also used in a study conducted by Kirksey et al. (2022) that examined the parental involvement of parents of SWD and how their parental role shifted once their child was placed into special education because the parent had to learn to advocate for the proper services for their SWD. The onset of the COVID-19 crisis brought awareness to how significant parental involvement is in the student's schooling process (Williams-Johnson & Gonzalez-DeHass, 2022). Lambert et al. (2022) used Hoover Dempsey and Sandler's model for parental involvement as a theoretical framework to examine the level of parental involvement of high school students with heightened EBD and students that did not exhibit EBD in a three-fold manner. They first examined the differences in parental involvement between EBD and those that did not exhibit EBD. Next, they evaluated the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement. Finally, they sought to determine whether the gap in achievement between EBD students and their non-disabled peers was related to parental involvement. Parental involvement was based on a six-factor framework that included:

1. the level of communication between home school,
2. parents' attendance at school-related activities,
3. how the parent and child talked about education,
4. parents' goals for the child's academic success,
5. the activities that the parent and child engaged in at home, and

6. how parents support their children with homework

The study's results revealed that parental involvement for EBD students was lower than for students who did not exhibit EBD in four of the six domains examined. It was also noted that there was a relationship between the exact four domains and academic achievement and that parental involvement may play a role in reducing the achievement gap between EBD students and those students that do not have EBD if parental involvement of EBD students is increased.

Numerous studies have been conducted on parental involvement and general education students. Thousands of studies have been conducted in other nations across the world about parental involvement in special education. However, more research is needed on parental involvement in special education in the US. Parental involvement in special education is an important topic that should be studied extensively to confirm the findings of current studies on this topic. Unfortunately, very few current studies exist on this topic.

Individual Education Program

Not all students can grasp the concepts taught in the general education setting without adjustments in the curriculum, instruction, or delivery. The needs of all students with differences must be addressed to ensure that they are able to learn at their maximum potential (Ntamu & Oyo-Ita, 2022). The required services for SWD are documented in an IEP. A student who receives any services in special education or related services must have an IEP (EAHCA, 1975). An IEP is a legal document containing valuable information about the SWD that dictates the types of services they will receive in the

academic setting. A student's present levels of performance, goals, accommodations, transition plan, placement and other services are addressed in the IEP (Kurth & Jackson, 2022). When one references the IEP of a SWD it should clearly depict who the student is, what services they require to function in the Least Restricted Environment (LRE) and the accommodations needed for the classroom and for testing. According to section 300.324 of IDEA (2004) all IEPs should contain the results of the psychological evaluation of the SWD, information on the strengths of SWD, input from parents and the academic, and functional and developmental needs of the SWD.

The enactment of the EAHCA (1975) was commonly called Public Law 92-142. This law was passed to ensure that all SWD receive a free and appropriate education (FAPE) and are afforded the opportunity to be educated in the same classroom environment as their non-disabled peers, or in the LRE (Martin et al., 1996). Before this law passed, school systems were not required to provide accommodations or specialized placements for SWD. This held true for those who were allowed to go to school, since they were often placed in special classrooms that restricted their ability to interact with their non-disabled peers (Martin et al., 1996). In 1990, the EAHCA was reauthorized to become the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (1997) addressing the individualized needs of every SWD. However, in 2004, IDEA was amended to become IDEA (2004). This reauthorization shifted focus from just addressing the individual needs of SWD to efforts for maximum inclusion in education settings for SWD (Scanlon et al., 2022). IDEA (2004) also included provisions for early intervention, increased standards for teachers of SWD, and improvements in the educational outcomes for SWD.

The need for students to have an IEP materialized from the enactment of EAHCA in 1975. As a result, SWD must receive an initial IEP upon the IEP committee's decision to place them in special education and have subsequent yearly reviews thereafter, at annual IEP meetings. The IEP provides a means to document the IEP committee members' decisions about the SWD (IDEA, 2004). The determination of what is to be included in the IEP emanates from the collaboration of relevant skilled professionals, along with the parents of the SWD at the IEP meeting. It is crucial for both parents and professionals to be involved in the construction of an IEP for it to be effective (Avnet et al., 2019; Lusa, 2008). Parents are provided copies of their rights prior to and at the IEP meeting.

Individual Education Program Meetings

Although the drafting of IDEA provided an avenue for parents to be protected in their right to engage in the special education process by attending IEP meetings and participating in the decision-making process, parents are often not involved (Murray et al., 2018). The essential conversations regarding a student's IEP take place in what is commonly referred to as an IEP meeting. These meetings are held to discuss and develop the IEP to meet the students' needs. The participants in the IEP meeting are generally the parents, general education teachers, special education case managers, an administrator, and other related service personnel that will provide services to the SWD (Solone et al., 2020). Those who are part of an IEP team are expected to collaborate and approach the meeting with a shared goal: to provide the SWD with services that will yield academic and social success in school (Solone et al., 2020).

During the annual review meeting, a review of the IEP of the SWD is conducted to determine their progress toward meeting IEP goals and objectives (IDEA, 2004). Special considerations or services are provided to SWD according to their specific need. For example, SWD who are blind receive braille reading accommodations, SWD who exhibit extreme behavior receive positive behavior support as part of their IEP, and those with language or communication disorders may require assistive technology (GaDoe, 2022).

There are very few studies that have been done on parents' non-attendance at IEP meetings and its implications for it. This study will fill a gap in both practice and research in this area. Most of the available research on this topic appears to have been before 2011. Because parents are a part of the IEP team, they play an important role in the decisions made in the meeting (Zagona et al., 2019). Researchers agree that parents must participate in the decision-making process for the SWD, and when they do it ensures that the IEP team has accurate information from both home and school to make the best decisions for the SWD (Goldman & Burke, 2016). There can be challenges when parents fail to participate in the IEP process (Dagen, 2021). The parent's role in the special education process entails more than just attending IEP meetings. If it is determined that the SWD needs a psychological evaluation at the annual IEP meeting, the psychologist cannot move forward with testing until the parent provides consent. Additionally, input from the parent is needed regarding the SWD developmental history and information on how they function in the home environment (Turnbull et al., 2015). Parents at the annual IEP meeting are vital for ensuring that children receive the most effective special

education services to perform at their optimal level (Chang et al., 2022; Kurth et al., 2019b; Tefera, 2019). Many parents of SWD fail to understand that they are part of a team that makes data-based decisions about their child's services at IEP meetings (Dagen, 2021; Kurth et al., 2019a; Murray et al., 2018; Schildkamp, 2019) and that they play an essential role in ensuring that their child is successful in school. Although there are skilled professionals that are part of the IEP team that will follow the guidelines outlined in IDEA (2004) and provide what they deem to be appropriate services for the SWD to receive in the absence of the parent, it is equally important that input from the parent of the SWD is provided. However, this is impossible if the parent does not attend the annual IEP meeting.

Contributing Factors to Parents not Attending IEP Meetings

The role of parents in special education meetings is important, but there remains a question as to why parents fail to attend. Research has documented several barriers that impede parents from attending IEP meetings. Parents' involvement at IEP meetings is often minimal because of a conflict in the work schedule, embarrassment about their child's condition, and language barriers (Dagen, 2021). Just as SWD requires accommodations to perform in the general education setting and testing, some parents require accommodations to get them to attend IEP meetings. Parents sometimes have the same disability as the student (Robinson et al., 2011). Kaplan et al. (2019) noted that people with developmental, intellectual, physical, and other disabilities become parents just as non-disabled people do. Another common barrier is a lack of respect between the school and parents (Goldman & Burke, 2016; Trussell et al., 2017). Poor communication

is also a common barrier between home and school (Goldman & Burke, 2016; Crompton, 2017), particularly among Latino parents (Wolfe & Durán, 2013). Parents' lack of understanding of special education terminology has been identified as a barrier to them attending annual IEP meetings (Smith & Krieg, 2022; Trussell et al., 2017). A study conducted by Pang et al. (2019) revealed that parents feel overwhelmed by the special education process and often do not believe that they are a vital part of the special education process for their child (Mueller & Buckley, 2014). The goal for parents is for them to be involved in their child's education.

Accommodations

A vital determination in the annual IEP meeting is how to provide the student with the proper accommodations to perform effectively in the general education setting. The psychological reports contain valuable individualized information about students. Burns et al. (2020) highlighted recommendations often made by psychologists regarding the types of accommodations and interventions that would best serve the assessed student. They further discuss the purpose of the psychological report and how the data are to be used for constructing goals in IEP meetings and establishing other supports for the SWD. Data is an essential tool that schools can use for multiple purposes. Schildkamp (2019) discussed the importance of using data to guide students' academic achievement and sharing the results with parents at annual IEP meetings to show students' academic achievement. The student receives accommodations and services tailored to meet their individual needs to equip them to succeed in the classroom and on classroom standardized and benchmark tests when parents and schools collaborate.

One of the primary purposes of accommodations is to ensure that the SWD receives supportive opportunities for classroom instruction and test-taking (Byrnes, 2008; Lovette, 2021). Accommodations alter how instruction and testing are provided without changing the content of the assessment (Lovette & Lewandowski, 2015). The number of accommodations that students receive across the United States is vast. Lovett and Nelson, (2020) found that students with attention deficit disorder (ADHD), for example, often are provided accommodations for both the classroom and for testing. They conducted a study to review the available research on accommodations and adolescent students with ADHD. The results indicated that the most immediate response to ADHD students is to provide them with accommodations, particularly extended time for testing. Kern et al. (2019) conducted a study to determine the accommodations high school EBD students receive in the classroom for state and district assessments. The results indicated that students receive far less accommodation for testing than for the classroom. The extended time accommodation was discussed by Lovette (2020). He referred to the fact that this accommodation benefits both disabled and non-disabled students and that students must receive the proper accommodations to assist them with performing to the best of their ability in the classroom and during testing. Lovett (2021) added that accommodations are essential for SWD learning and testing.

Accommodations that are often given to SWD are reading tests aloud, extended time to complete tests and assignments, and testing in a small group (Burns et al., 2020). Students who have autism spectrum disorder often receive accommodations for test taking and, in the classroom, such as extended time, executive functioning training, and

notetaking assistance (Dallas et al., 2018). The level of support a student requires is agreed upon in the annual IEP meeting. McGlynn and Kelly (2019) confirmed that providing accommodations for SWD allows them to have supports that best fit their learning needs. They provided insight into the difficulties that teachers sometimes have with implementing accommodations. It was emphasized in their study that accommodations are not optional and that their implementation of them is a legal responsibility. It was further stated that accommodations allow SWD to access the curriculum in a way that helps them succeed. When SWD have the appropriate accommodations, their performance is often boosted, and anxiety lessened (Lovett, 2020).

For standardized testing, IDEA (2004) states that SWD should be provided with the appropriate accommodations for all state and district-wide assessments. For students who cannot participate in regular education standards-based assessments and receive instruction under alternative standards, alternative assessments will be administered. The complexity of testing for SWD involves making decisions about the appropriate accommodations needed for summative, district, and state assessments which further validates the fact that the presence of the SWD parent is needed to assist in the decision-making process.

An important goal in U. S. education is to ensure that all SWD are afforded an equal opportunity to learn and are educated in the LRE (Tefera, 2019). Although SWD are expected to meet the same standards of instruction as their non-disabled peers in the classroom and for benchmark testing, they require an added level of support to be

successful (Kovacs et al., 2022). According to Georgia Rule 160.4-7-.07, SWD are to be taught the Georgia Standards of Excellence with the exact challenging expectations as non-disabled students. To ensure that SWD are equipped with the tools to be successful, accommodations, supplementary aids, and services are provided as documented in the student's IEP. Accommodations change how class assignments and tests are administered, not the content (Kern et al., 2019). Establishing proper accommodations in the classroom and during testing allows for a greater chance of the SWD performing well.

Benchmark Tests

Parent involvement is also essential when planning for benchmark test taking for SWD. Information obtained from benchmark test scores is essential for classroom teachers to effectively monitor their student's progress (Thomsen et al., 2022). They provide educators with valuable information about students' strengths and weaknesses. The classroom teacher generally administers these assessments several times throughout the school year. They provide a basis for adjustments in instruction to be made (Abrams et al., 2015; Chan et al., 2014) by reteaching the subject matter, changing their instructional presentation, and including time in the instructional period to practice the skill. Benchmark tests can be formative or summative assessments used in the classroom at various checkpoints. The test scores can also be used to assess standards set by the state and national governments at various grade levels (Schildkamp, 2019). Benchmark assessments serve four purposes: to plan instruction, to communicate what should take place in the learning environment, to monitor, and to forecast the future (Herman et al.,

2010). The chances of SWD performing well on benchmark tests may be diminished if parents are not present at annual IEP meetings to add their input regarding the testing accommodations that would benefit their child. Significant gaps in scores between SWD and those without disabilities imply that SWD are not performing well academically. Gilmour et al. (2019) determined that achievement gaps exist between SWD and their non-disabled peers and that they may not be effectively accessing the curriculum. It was also noted a 3-year gap in reading growth between SWD and their non-disabled peers. The gap in test scores may be attributed to parents' non-attendance at annual IEP meetings (Lambert et al., 2022) and the need for appropriate accommodations.

Formative and Summative Benchmark Assessments

Teachers assess students by formative measures to obtain immediate feedback about their progress. Formative assessments are frequently administered to students to develop a plan to remediate learning deficits (Hoover & Abrams, 2013). The formative data that is gathered helps improve students' acquisition of the grade-level curriculum (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, & the National Council on Measurement in Education, 2014) by adjusting instruction based on the data obtained from formative assessments. According to Dixson and Worrell (2016), formative data can be obtained from homework, observations, self-evaluations, tests, and quizzes. Exit tickets, where teachers pose questions to the students at the lesson's conclusion, are a type of formative assessment (Cornelius, 2013). Exit tickets help students demonstrate their understanding of what was taught, and teachers are provided with immediate feedback on whether to re-teach the lesson or move forward

with the next area of instruction.

Summative assessments provide an evaluative means of obtaining information about whether the student is prepared to move to the next level. They also reveal whether the student has learned the cumulative learning goals for their specified grade level (Dixson & Worrell, 2016). In the educational setting, summative assessments may consist of unit tests, final projects, final exams, standardized tests, and other ways that can collect cumulative data.

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Types of Summative and Formative Benchmark Tests

Students are assessed periodically to determine the level of progress they are making towards mastering the required standards, either through classroom formative and summative assessments given by the teacher, or standardized tests established by the state in which they reside. In the state of Georgia, the end of course (EOC) tests are administered to students at the end of algebra I, biology, American Literature and United States History to obtain summative data on the student's progress towards mastering the academic standards of the course that they are enrolled in. EOC tests serve as final exams for these courses (GaDOE, 2022). The questions that are developed are derived from the Georgia Standards of Excellence. The EOC tests provide an overview of students' strengths and needs, show how effective teachers are instructing them and demonstrate the preparedness of the students to move on to the next course. End of Course (EOC) tests are a part of the state of Georgia's accountability system-the College and Career Ready Performance Index (GaDOE, 2022). EOC tests have been used for several years but they are only one of several ways to assess the progress of students in the state of Georgia.

Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress.

Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) has improved student learning outcomes for

over 40 years. It has assessed over 4 million students (about twice the population of New Mexico) worldwide using online assessments called the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test. The NWEA MAP tests are adaptive tests that identify the strengths and weaknesses of students to inform educators about how to address the student's specific needs.

The NWEA MAP tests are administered in language usage, math, reading, and science at the school year's beginning, middle, and end. NWEA MAP also provides a means to measure students' academic growth. The test questions on the secondary level are aligned to the state standards and range in number from 40-43 questions depending on how well the student responds. Schools can immediately access students' scores on the NWEA MAP in the individual student format or the whole class format. NWEA MAP also produces an individualized report for families. The data obtained from NWEA MAP is used extensively throughout various levels of the educational system.

NWEA MAP has demonstrated its commitment to meeting the needs of all students, including SWD, by ensuring they have equal access to the assessments. As such, they have devised a way to include the individualized accommodations of every SWD that takes an assessment. Prior to administering the assessments, teachers can pre-set the unique accommodations of every SWD. Some accommodations available are highlighting information, using a screen reader, extended time, and others. Although several benchmark tests are available, the unique inclusive features of NWEA MAP are why it was chosen to be used in this study. Data from the Growth Reading 6+ and Growth Math 6+ of SWD in the 11th grade at the study site will be used. NWEA MAP

was first used in the school district where this study will take place in the 2022-2023 school year.

Classworks Summative Benchmark Assessments. Classworks summative benchmark assessments are online assessments provided to a Multi-tiered System of Supports and SWD to provide academic instruction, assessments, monitoring, and data reports. Classworks assessments can be used for both elementary and secondary students. At the secondary level, students are assessed in geometry, algebra 1, and English 1. Each assessment is developed from the grade-level curriculum. Students are tested three times per year to determine their level of growth over time. Classworks summative benchmark assessments are also used to determine whether teachers, students, districts, and other populations meet learning goals. Classworks has significantly impacted the academic success of millions of students (www.classworks.com).

Summary and Conclusion

Chapter 2 began with an overview of the problem that will be addressed in this study. The problem to be studied is the potential effects of the lack of parent participation at IEP meetings on students' achievement. The strategy used to research relevant topics and the databases used were discussed. Searches were conducted to access scholarly journal articles and book chapters over the past 5 years in databases such as Thoreau, ERIC (ProQuest), Education Research Complete (EBSCO), and Galileo. An extensive presentation of Hoover Dempsey and Sandler's Model of the Parental Involvement Process was presented along with discussions about other similar parental involvement frameworks. The literature review encompassed resources from scholarly journals and

books to support topics such as IEPs, IEP meetings, contributing factors to why parents do not attend IEP meetings, accommodations, benchmark tests, and a brief history of special education. There were at least two themes that were evident in the research. The first theme revealed that parental involvement indicates academic success. This was observed throughout the research on parental involvement. The second theme revealed that important decisions are made at IEP meetings that impact the programming of SWD.

Chapter 3: Research Method

This quantitative study was aimed to investigate the difference in NWEA MAP benchmark achievement test scores in Growth reading 6+ and Growth math 6+ scores between 11th-grade SWD whose parents attended the annual IEP meeting versus those whose parents did not attend IEP meetings. This chapter includes the research design and rationale, the methodology, threats to validity, and ethical procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

This quantitative study was conducted using an ex post facto design. Ex post facto methods are commonly used when the research is focused on examining the relationship between the independent and dependent variable from information that has already occurred, with no manipulation of the independent variable (Ugwuanyi et al., 2022). Ex post facto defines research that involves examining the effects of naturally occurring events that have already taken place (Silva, 2010). The independent variable in this study is parents' attendance or non-attendance at the annual IEP meeting. The dependent variables are MAP Growth reading (6+) scores and MAP math (6+) scores. The NWEA MAP tests are standardized assessments that measure language usage, math, reading, and science at the school year's beginning, middle, and end. These assessments provide a means for schools to obtain summative scores and long-term growth data. Further, scores from NWEA Map tests provide insight to teachers in how to adjust instruction.

The independent variable, parents of SWD attendance or non-attendance at the annual IEP meeting cannot be manipulated. Further, archived data of parents of SWD attendance or non-attendance at their SWD annual IEP Meeting during the 2022–2023

school year and benchmark test scores from the NWEA Map Growth reading (6+) and math (6+) from the same school year were used in this study. The use of archival information supports the use of the ex post facto design. This data may show the importance of school districts doing more to ensure that parents of SWD attend annual IEP meetings.

Methodology

Population

The target population for this study came from a pool of 175 parents of 11th-grade SWD who participated in the NWEA Map Growth reading (6+) and Growth math (6+) benchmark assessments during the 2022–2023 school year. This population of parents included several low-incidence SWD with severe disabilities at the site where this study took place, but they were not included.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

Data collection for this study came from a high school in a large urban school district in a southeastern U.S. state. The school's population is 2,300 students, with approximately 175 receiving special education services. Permission was sought from the school district's office of research and evaluation and the school's principal where the study took place to gain access to information about parents' attendance or non-attendance at annual IEP meetings for the high school where the study took place and test results from the NWEA Map Growth reading (6+) and Growth math (6+) scores for the 11th grade SWD who were tested during the 2022–2023 school year.

Once the data were received, the information from parents of SWD was compiled

into two groups based on their attendance or non-attendance at the annual IEP meeting during the 2022–2023, and each parent of SWD was assigned a number that corresponded with their SWD NWEA Map test scores to eliminate the divulging of any personal information. Scores from the NWEA Map test in Growth reading (6+) and Growth math (6+) were examined for SWD whose parents attended the annual IEP meeting and those who did not.

Archival Data

Information for this study was obtained from archived data that are in the high school of a southeastern U.S. school district. Permission was obtained to receive the NWEA Map Growth reading (6+) and Growth math (6+) test scores of the 11th-grade students that attend the school that was included in this study and the attendance of the parents of 11th grade SWD at the annual IEP meeting. The school district's procedure for obtaining information for research is to submit a research request application to obtain permission to conduct research.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

With the NCLB Act of 2001 came the idea of measuring student performance. Initially, the focus was on annual summative assessments, but it was soon discovered that teachers needed to assess more frequently to monitor students' progress and inform instruction (Guilfoyle, 2006). Benchmark assessments allow for more frequent testing and are structured according to purpose, users, and the desired use of the instrument (Herman & Baker, 2005). Benchmark assessments were soon implemented periodically to determine students' progress toward meeting learning goals.

The benchmark assessment that was used in this study is the NWEA Map test Growth reading (6+) and Growth math (6+). The NWEA Map test consists of computer-based math, reading, social studies, and science assessments. It is administered three times per year and is aligned with state standards. A validity study was conducted recently to connect the state milestone scales in English/language arts and math to the NWEA Map reading and math tests. The state milestone exam consists of three cut scores: Level 1: beginning learner, Level 2: developing learner, Level 3: proficient learner, and Level 4: distinguished learner.

The makeup of MAP assessments is different from the state milestone exams. MAP assessments are vertically scaled and allow for the measurement of academic progress. Scores from the NWEA Map are reported on a Rasch Unit (RIT) scale ranging from 100 to 350 (Thum & Hauser, 2015). Students who take the NWEA Map test are assigned their own RIT scale. Student scores obtained from the NWEA Map tests can be used to predict their state milestone performance level.

Data Analysis Plan

The software used to analyze the data in this study was the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 28. The research question that guided this study is “What is the relationship between parents of high school SWD attendance at annual IEP meetings and students’ test scores on the NWEA MAP Growth reading (6+) and math (6+) benchmark test scores versus scores from SWD whose parents did not attend annual IEP meetings?” The SWD NWEA Map Growth reading (6+) and Growth math (6+) tests for the three testing sessions were compared to parents’ attendance or non-attendance at

the annual IEP meeting. An independent samples *t* test was conducted to determine the mean difference between the two independent variable groups.

Threats to Validity

Using an ex post facto study is valuable in many ways, but it also has some weaknesses in validity (Silva, 2010). Internal and external threats to validity may exist in an ex post facto research design. A possible threat to internal validity can occur because the ex post facto design does not allow for the manipulation of the independent variable and allows only for a non-random sample, which threatens internal validity (Silva, 2010). External validity may be threatened because the non-random selection of participants may limit statistical inference, and the study may not be generalized to a larger population (Silva, 2010). In this study, a restricted sample of test scores limited the generalizability of the results.

Ethical Procedures

Walden University has put in place several policies and procedures to guide students in operating ethically when conducting research, including how to obtain the appropriate clearances from all agencies involved in the research. The district where this study was conducted required that an application be filed with the Office of Testing and Evaluation before starting research. Although I have close ties to the district, I had to follow the policy for employees conducting research, which involves filing an application, showing proof of IRB approval, and obtaining permission from the school's principal where the study took place. When approval was granted, measures were taken to protect the confidential information from the SWD NWEA Map test scores and

information on parents' attendance at IEP meetings. Also, the name of the school district, the school study site, and the parents of SWD whose records were used were also protected. All data were stored in a password-protected device.

Summary

Chapter 3 restated the purpose of this study, which is to investigate the difference in NWEA MAP benchmark achievement test scores in Growth reading 6+ and Growth math 6+ scores between 11th-grade SWD whose parents attended the annual IEP meeting those whose parents did not attend the annual IEP meeting. A description of the research design, which included the variables and the research design connection to the research question, was given. The study's methodology was discussed, referencing the population, sampling procedure, archival data, instrumentation of constructs, threats to validity, and ethical procedures. Chapter 4 will include sections on data collection and the results.

Chapter 4: Results

This quantitative, ex post facto study was conducted to investigate the difference in NWEA MAP benchmark achievement test scores in the areas of Growth reading 6+ and Growth math 6+ scores between 11th grade SWD whose parents attended the annual IEP meeting versus those whose parents did not attend the annual IEP meeting. The research question was “What is the relationship between parents of high school SWD attendance at annual IEP meetings and students’ test scores on the NWEA MAP Growth reading (6+) and math (6+) benchmark test scores versus scores from SWD whose parents did not attend annual IEP meetings?” Records from parents’ attendance at the annual IEP meetings were examined along with data from high school benchmark test for 11th grade SWD during the 2022–2023 school year at a local high school.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the data collection and an analysis of the data. A detailed description of the timeline of events and the procedures for obtaining the NWEA test results and records of parents’ attendance at IEP meetings will be discussed. Results from the independent samples *t* test will be provided.

Data Collection

The data for this study were obtained from a high school in a school district in a southeastern state in the United States. Data received included NWEA MAP scores from Growth reading (6+) and Growth math (6+) for ($n = 71$) 11th grade students for three testing periods during the 2022–2023 school year. The data packet also included a list of 11th grade parents of SWD who attended the annual review meeting during the 2022–2023 school year and those who did not attend. The parents’ and students’ names were

not attached to the data, but the same number was attached to the student and the parent. Once I received the data, I assigned my own distinct identifier to the test scores of the SWD and a corresponding identifier to their parent. The data were then transferred to an Excel sheet and kept under a secure password.

Data Analysis

An independent samples t test was conducted to test the research question and determine if any statistical differences existed between the means of parents who attended or did not attend the annual IEP meeting on their child's benchmark test scores. One of the ways that an independent samples t test is used is to compare the means of two unrelated groups (Laerd Statistics, n.d.). To determine whether the analysis of the data could take place, it had to be established that there would be a continuous dependent variable, that there were no outliers, a normal distribution of the dependent variable for the groups that make up the independent variable existed, and relatively equal variance in each group of the independent variable was evident (Laerd, n. d.). In this study, the six assumptions for the independent samples t -test were not violated. The analysis provided insight into whether parents of SWD attendance at the annual IEP meeting influenced SWD benchmark test scores.

Results

SPSS was used to conduct an independent samples t test to determine if there was a statistical significance between the benchmark test scores of SWD whose parents attended the annual IEP meeting and parents of SWD who did not attend. A significance level of 0.05 was used. The test was given during the fall, winter, and spring, in which

SWD in the 11th grade took part. Each testing session covered both Growth reading (6+) and Growth math (6+). Table 1 displays information on parents who attended the annual IEP meeting ($n = 56$) and the number of parents who did not attend $n = 15$, along with the results of achievement means among groups and achievement areas.

Table 1

Parents' IEP Meeting Attendance or Non-Attendance

	Attendance	N	Mean	SD
SWD	Parents Who Attended IEP Meeting	56	210.45	14.486
Fall/Math	Parents Who Did Not Attend IEP Meeting	15	210.27	18.828
SWD	Parents Who Attended IEP Meeting	56	212.23	15.314
Winter/Math	Parents Who Did Not Attend IEP Meeting	15	209.47	21.728
SWD	Parents Who Attended IEP Meeting	56	213.30	15.562
Spring/Math	Parents Who Did Not Attend IEP Meeting	15	209.47	24.524
SWD	Parents Who Attended IEP Meeting	56	208.23	15.230
Fall/Reading	Parents Who Did Not Attend IEP Meeting	15	206.60	18.935
SWD	Parents Who Attended IEP Meeting	56	208.36	14.807
Winter/Reading	Parents Who Did Not Attend IEP Meeting	15	201.00	18.385
SWD	Parents Who Attended IEP Meeting	56	208.38	17.405
Spring/Reading	Parents Who Did Not Attend IEP Meeting	15	206.73	17.507

Table 2 illustrates the results from the t test across achievement areas. A 95% confidence interval was used. Equal variances were assumed, and all testing sessions of the NWEA Map test for the 2022-2023 school year in the areas of both Growth reading and math (6+) had p values above $p > .05$. Results showed that the mean scores for reading for SWD` in each testing session on the NWEA Map test were lower than in each of the math sessions.

Table 2*Independent Samples T Test*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
		F	Sig.	t	df
SWD	Equal variances assumed	2.510	.118	.040	69
Fall/Math	Equal variances not assumed			.034	18.672
SWD	Equal variances assumed	1.363	.247	.566	69
Winter/Math	Equal variances not assumed			.463	17.893
SWD	Equal variances assumed	1.919	.170	.744	69
Spring/Math	Equal variances not assumed			.576	17.132
SWD	Equal variances assumed	1.130	.291	.350	69
Fall/Reading	Equal variances not assumed			.308	19.126
SWD	Equal variances assumed	1.457	.231	1.622	69
Winter/Reading	Equal variances not assumed			1.431	19.141
SWD	Equal variances assumed	.000	.995	.324	69
Spring/Reading	Equal variances not assumed			.323	22.001

The results of the independent samples *t* test indicated that there was no significant difference among achievement means for both groups and all achievement areas. The null hypothesis in this study was that there would be no significant relationship between benchmark test scores on the NWEA Map Growth reading (6+) and (Growth math (6+) assessments and parents' attendance at annual IEP meetings between parents' attendance versus non-attendance at the annual IEP meeting. Based on the data analysis the null hypothesis was accepted.

Summary

This quantitative ex post facto study was conducted to investigate the difference in NWEA MAP benchmark achievement test scores in the areas of Growth reading 6+ and Growth math 6+ scores between 11th grade SWD whose parents attended the annual IEP meeting versus those whose parents who did not attend IEP meetings. SPSS was

used to run an independent samples t test to compare the mean scores of the two groups. The results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in the mean test scores of SWD NWEA MAP overall and in any of the testing sessions on the Growth reading (6+) and Growth math (6+) based on whether parents attended the annual IEP meeting or did not attend the meeting. The SWD mean test scores were slightly higher in the spring/math session for parents who attended the annual IEP meeting but did not reach statistical significance. The reading scores for SWD on the NWEA Map tests were lower than math in each testing session, whether parents attended the annual IEP meeting or not.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this ex post facto quantitative study was to investigate the difference in NWEA MAP benchmark test scores in Growth reading 6+ and Growth math 6+ scores between 11th grade SWD whose parents attended the annual IEP meeting versus those whose parents did not attend IEP meetings. Data were obtained from school records of parents' who attended or did not attend the annual IEP meeting, along with data from high school benchmark tests for 11th grade SWD during the 2022–2023 school year. The independent variables in this study were parents' attendance or non-attendance at IEP meetings, and the dependent variable was NWEA MAP Growth reading (6+) scores and Growth math (6+) benchmark test scores. The school site used had about 175 SWD during the 2022–2023 school year. The number of parents in attendance at the annual IEP meeting for the same year was ($N = 71$) 11th grade SWD.

Interpretation of the Findings

The high school chosen for this study was selected because of the large population of SWD at this school. Of the 71 parents of 11th grade SWD, 56 attended the annual IEP meeting. The overall percentage of parent attendance at the annual IEP meetings at this high school is 80% (GaDOE, 2022).

Researchers have noted that parental involvement positively impacts students' academic success (Domina, 2005; Mueller, 1995, 1998; Sui-Chu & Williams, 1996). However, this was not supported by the results from this study. The outcome of this study does not support that parents' non-attendance at IEP meetings contributes to SWD lack of achievement on benchmark tests (Lambert et al., 2022). The findings in this study

revealed that parent's attendance or non-attendance at the annual IEP meeting did not directly influence the performance of SWD on the NWEA MAP test benchmark scores of 11th grade SWD. It is possible that other variables may be more critical in helping SWD to do better on benchmark tests, such as parent-teacher collaboration, the parent having knowledge of special education, and a basic understanding of the school curriculum to reinforce what is being taught at home. These variables might be independent of IEP meeting parental attendance. Regardless, the results of this study help to bring awareness of parents' responsibility not just to attend the annual IEP meeting but to be involved in their child's entire schooling process. It may also be essential to determine if schools are correctly implementing the accommodations established for SWD for testing (see Lambert et al., 2022). It cannot be confirmed that fidelity was taken to ensure that all accommodations for all SWD in each testing session were provided.

Limitations

This study was conducted on a specific population of 11th grade SWD and an IEP parental attendance variable. It did not examine other high school grade levels or parents of SWD and students on other educational levels, such as elementary or middle school, where previous research indicated that parental attendance was more extensive than the secondary level (Seginer, 2006; Spera, 2009). Additionally, this study did not investigate the educational attainment level of the parents of SWD, their socioeconomic status, or whether there was a positive relationship between home and school. Adding some of these variables to this study may have given a broader understanding of whether parents' attendance at IEP meetings or non-attendance would affect SWD benchmark test scores.

Recommendations

K-12 educational institutions' goal is to maximize SWD achievement and have involvement from parents at meetings and other school activities. Researchers have stated that parent's attendance at IEP meetings is an important indicator of student success (Hirano & Rowe, 2016; Newman, 2005). As a follow-up to this study, other variables such as education, socioeconomic status, knowledge of special education, level of involvement with the school as it relates to the parents, and fidelity in implementing accommodations to SWD should be considered. The high school that was used in this study had 80% of their parents attend the annual IEP meeting. However, it is unknown whether the parents were knowledgeable enough about special education and the types of services they could advocate for. Additionally, there are no accountability procedures known that confirm that all accommodations were implemented for testing for SWD.

Parents of SWD should be educated and trained on topics in special education that would allow them to function as viable decision-makers on the IEP team. While attendance at the IEP meeting is vital for the parent, what matters most is that they can understand what is taking place at the meeting and provide relevant input to support their child. It might also be beneficial to assess the parents' degree of understanding of an IEP meeting's content. Even when parents attend, if they are unclear of the meeting's purpose or goals, they likely will not be translated to their child in a meaningful manner.

Implications

Most of the current research on parents of SWD attendance at annual IEP meetings contradicts the findings of this study. However, most of those studies are

anecdotal and did not directly assess student achievement outcomes due to the parent attendance variable. An important implication from this study is that parents of SWD attendance or non-attendance at the annual IEP meeting do not affect their benchmark test scores. A parent's attendance at the IEP meeting allows them to review whether the SWD receives the proper accommodations, programming, and services. The fact that the parents of SWD's attendance at the annual IEP meeting did not significantly influence SWD benchmark test scores has important implications for further research in this area. It is possible that there are variables within the construction of the Growth achievement tests that do not generalize from classroom achievement gains to improved standardized test score results. It is also possible that parent attendance at IEP meetings might improve actual classroom achievement versus standardized test score gains, as studies support that parents' attendance at IEP meetings does increase academic achievement (Suetter-Nicholson, 2019).

Social change due to the results of this study are that more needs to be defined about what takes place in IEP meetings to facilitate transfer of meeting content to actual achievement gains for SWD. Additionally, other factors must be researched on how to increase SWD benchmark test scores. This study may spur educational leaders and researchers to investigate ways that parents' and educators' training and accountability measures may contribute to the success of SWD on benchmark test scores.

The theoretical framework that guided this study is Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995) model of the parental process. This theory states that student academic outcome is related to parental involvement. Although this study did not show that parents

of SWD attendance at the annual review meeting increased benchmark test scores, this theoretical model provided valuable structure to this research study that examined parental involvement and how it might affect students' benchmark test scores. It further clarifies why parents' attendance at the annual IEP is only one factor in ensuring success on benchmark test scores for SWD.

Conclusion

This study has contributed to the body of literature that seeks to understand the importance of parent attendance at IEP meetings in relation to standardized test score results from SWD. From the results of this study that parents' attendance at the annual IEP meeting alone does not significantly affect SWD benchmark test scores. Additional research is needed to determine how other factors contribute to the success of SWD on benchmark test scores.

Several studies have been conducted on the topic of parental involvement. However, limited current research that specifically references parents' attendance at IEP meetings is available. This study may be the first to quantify parents' attendance or non-attendance at IEP meetings and how it affects benchmark test scores. This study may also be used as a launching pad into many other studies that may unlock the pathway to greater success for the achievement of SWD.

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