

# From IEP to the Classroom: Perspectives of General Educators on the Implementation of IEP Goals for Children with Autism

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## Introduction

Children with the educational classification of autism most commonly have core deficits in social and behavioral functioning. If these deficits affect the child's education, social and behavioral goals and interventions must be included in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) in order to meet Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) standards (IDEA, 1997). As of 1997, IDEA mandated inclusion of the general education teacher in the IEP process. With the inclusion of special and regular educators, the school psychologist, the parent and (in some cases) the student, the creation and implementation of IEP goals has become increasingly collaborative (Martin et al., 2004, p.286). As special education becomes more collaborative, new challenges emerge. For example, research suggests that general education teachers may be lacking in the training necessary for their participation in development and implementation of the IEP (Lee-Tarver, 2006). Furthermore, collaboration among school staff has been identified as a barrier to successful social and behavioral intervention by those involved in the IEP process (Rennie et al., 2012). The discrepancy between the assumptions of creating IEP goals and actual practice suggests a need for a closer look at the utility of the IEP goals that are being created.

In an effort to further develop the themes discussed above, a survey was created and administered to general education teachers who have worked with a child with autism in their classroom within the last three years. The goals of this survey were to:

- Identify who writes the goals for the IEP
- Identify who implements interventions
- Identify the role and expectations of general education teachers in carrying out social and behavioral IEP goals
- Identify current social and behavioral interventions being used
- Identify training provided to general education teachers focused on social and behavioral interventions

## Methods

Participants were selected from a random sample of counties and districts in both Idaho and Utah to determine which public schools would be contacted to elicit participation from general education teachers. After the random sample, general education teachers were contacted through email to participate in an online survey through SurveyMonkey. In Idaho, 45 public schools with 682 general educators were contacted. In Utah, 44 public schools with 1,347 general educators were contacted.

The survey consisted of 21 questions that were both qualitative and quantitative pertaining to the implementation of social and behavioral IEP goals for children with an IDEA classification of autism.

Descriptive statistics were used to report the responses of participants on the quantitative questions within the study survey. Participant responses were compiled, and from these responses, categories of responses were determined if there were three or more responses to comprise a category. These categories were then divided into themes.

## Acknowledgements

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## Results

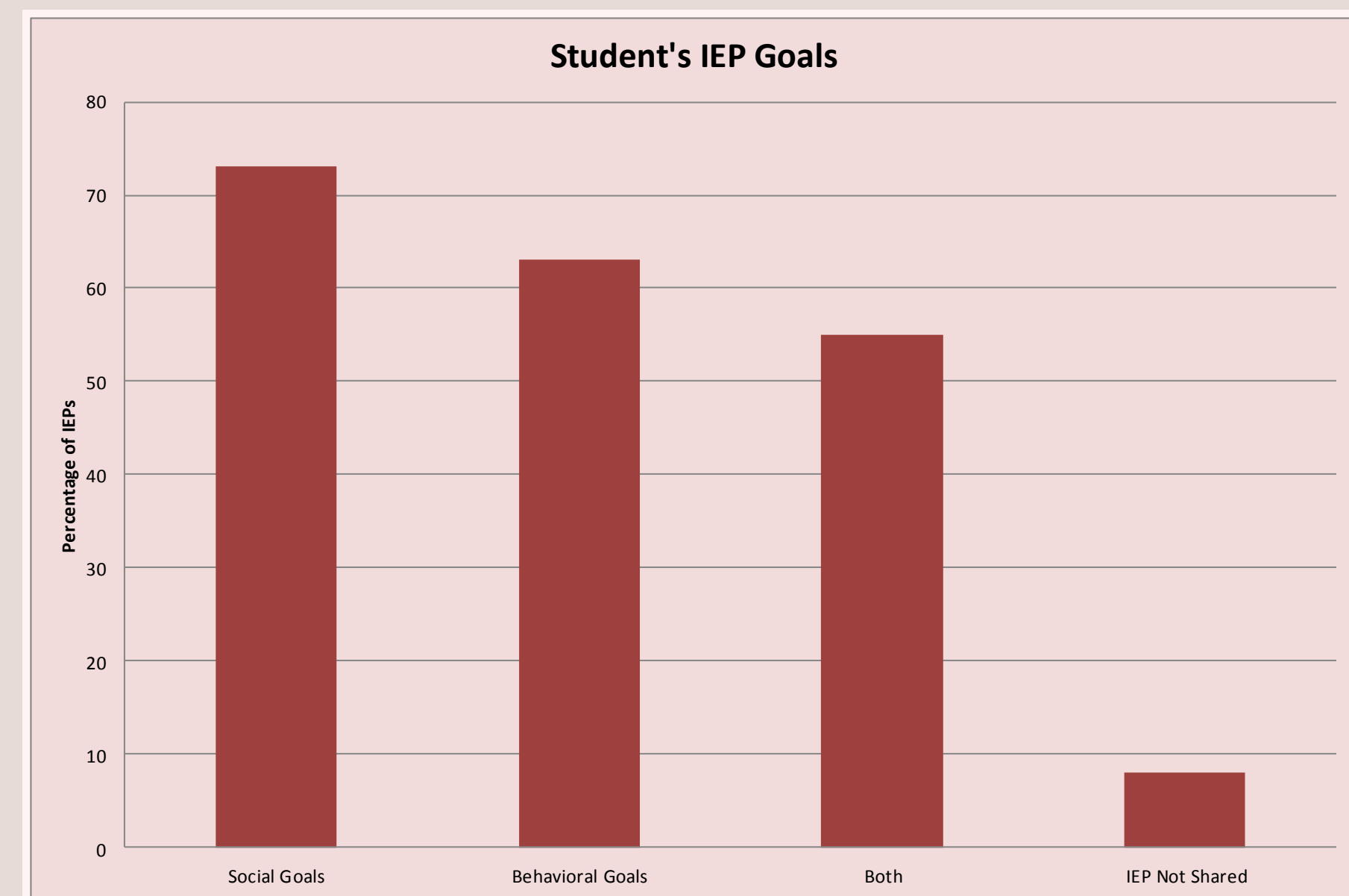


Figure 1. Percentage reported out of 290 IEPs

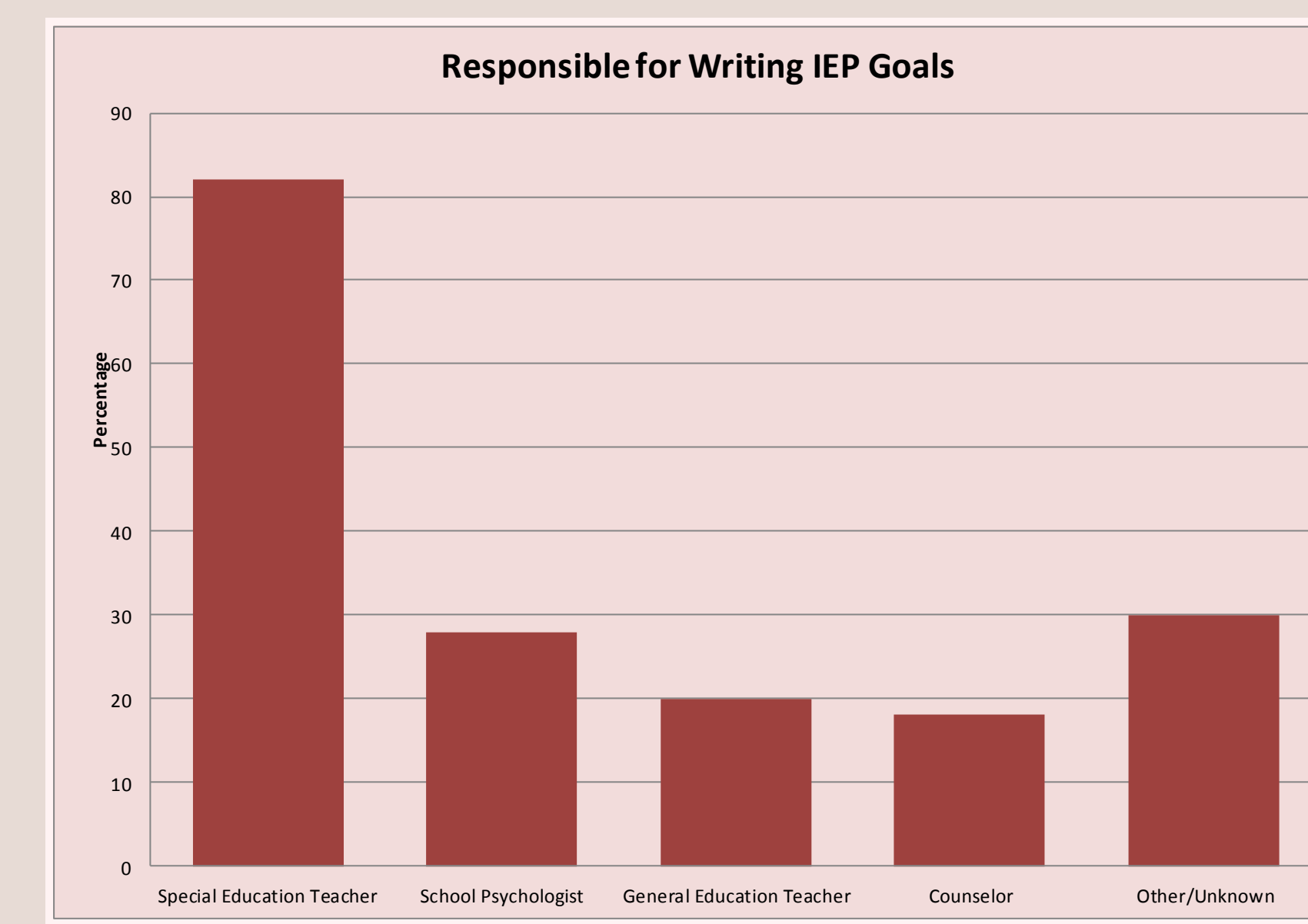


Figure 2. Professionals responsible for writing IEP goals



Figure 3. Perspectives of adequate training



Figure 4. Goal Implementation for IEPs

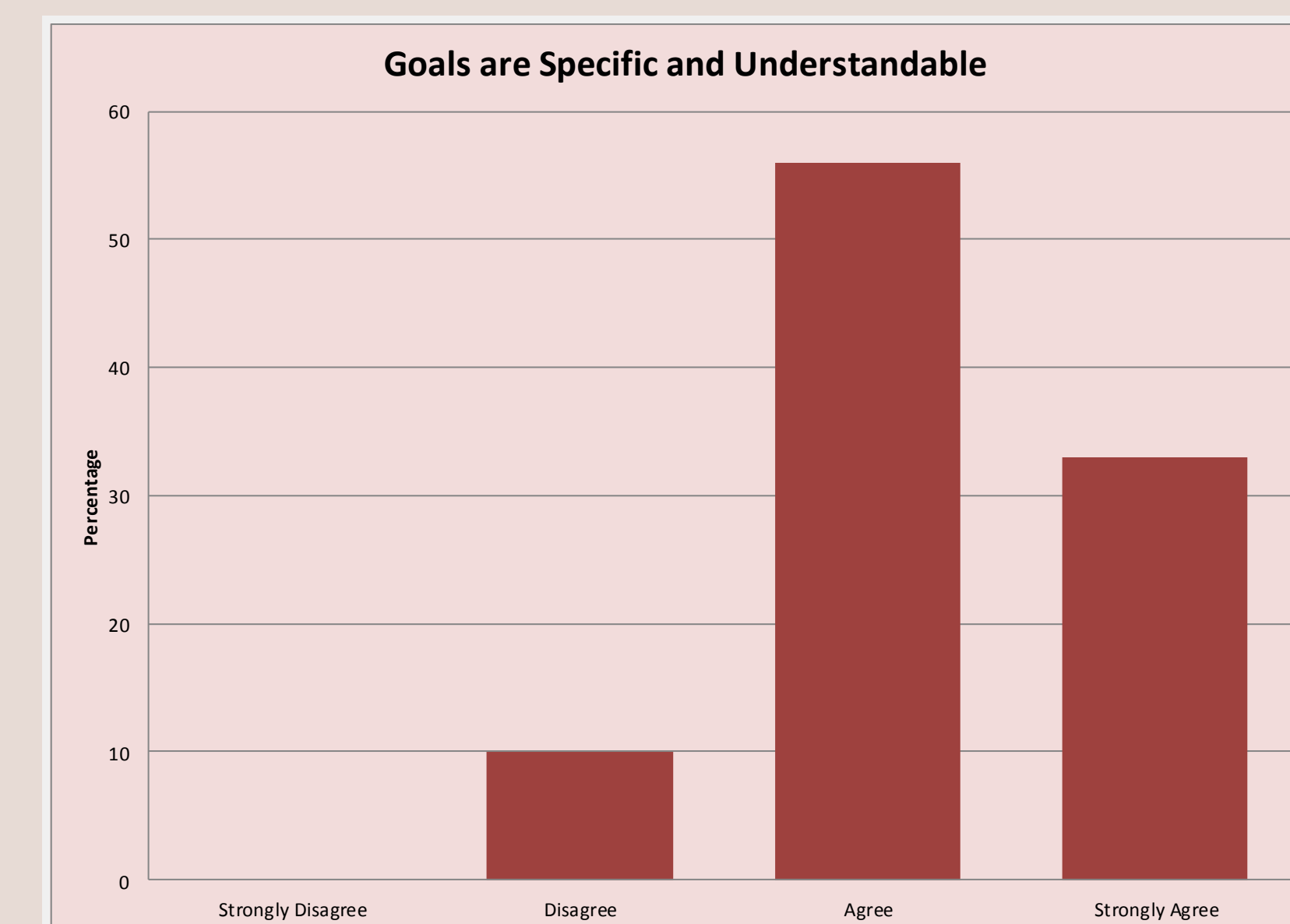


Figure 5. Perspective of goals on IEPs

## References

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997, Pub. L. No. 105-17.
- Lee-Tarver, A. (2006). Are individualized education plans a good thing? A survey of teachers' perceptions of the utility of IEPs in regular education settings. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 33(4), 263-272.
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- Rennie, B., Mitchell, G. E., Parikh, M., Newcomb, A., Milkavich, L., & Sarkowski, M. (2012). Social and behavioral individual education program (IEP) goals: An exploration of practice. *School Psychology: From Science to Practice*, 5(2), 10-17.

## Conclusions

- General educators consistently felt that there was a lack of adequate training for working with students with a classification of autism
- Over half of respondents indicated they lacked adequate experience and training to work with children with a classification of autism
- Seventeen percent of the respondents indicated a lack of clarity within the school team as to who is responsible for the implementation of IEP goals
- Less than half admitted they "rarely or never use" the IEP stated goals
- Teachers do not have a clear understanding of "evidence based interventions" specifically focusing on social and behavioral deficits



## Limitations and Future Research

### Limitations

- Small sample size in Idaho due to all randomly selected schools being rural, small school districts, thus the larger more urban schools were not represented.
- Permission to survey teachers in one of the largest, randomly selected districts in Utah was received days before the survey closed.
- In one of the districts in Utah, the survey was given to principals in each school who were then expected to distribute to all appropriate educators.
- A lack of access or availability of publicly published email addresses for teachers in smaller, rural districts and/or the emails reaching intended recipients without being returned as undeliverable.
- Many teachers who received the survey couldn't participate due to the qualifier that teachers must have had a student with an ASD in *the last three years*.

### Future Research

- Types of trainings offered in various districts with the aims to train teachers working with children with ASD.
- Include special educators in a similar survey to evaluate their feelings regarding training and interventions in working with the ASD population.
- Revised survey questions pertaining to the use of specific evidence based practices when working with children with ASD to see which interventions are being used in schools or if respondents have any level of familiarity and/or training in specific interventions.
- Sharing findings with both the Idaho Department of Education and the Utah Department of Education to address the common theme of lack of training and exposure to interventions when working with children with ASD.
- Larger sample size by distributing the survey to all districts in both states instead of utilizing a random sample.

