

Designing an IEP Decision Aid: A Local Tool for Parents of Children with Autism



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Background

- Parent participation in educational decision-making is important (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; IDEIA, 2004).
- Partnership in IEP decision-making is especially important for parents of diverse culture and SES, who participate at lower rates, and for whom participation and partnership may mean different things (Epstein, 2001; Gaitan, 2004).
- Parents also report that the relationship with their child's IEP team is a significant factor in their perception of the decision-making process. (Blue-Banning, et al, 2004; Schuttler, 2011)
- Parents report a need for knowledge about their child's IEP and support in decision-making related to special education services. (Schuttler, 2011; Rock, 2000)

Purpose and Hypotheses

Purpose and Rationale:

- To design a locally relevant and socially valid tool, in partnership with key stakeholders, that will support IEP decision-making for parents of children with autism.
- To explore the impact of using this tool on parent knowledge and perspectives on working with their child's IEP team.

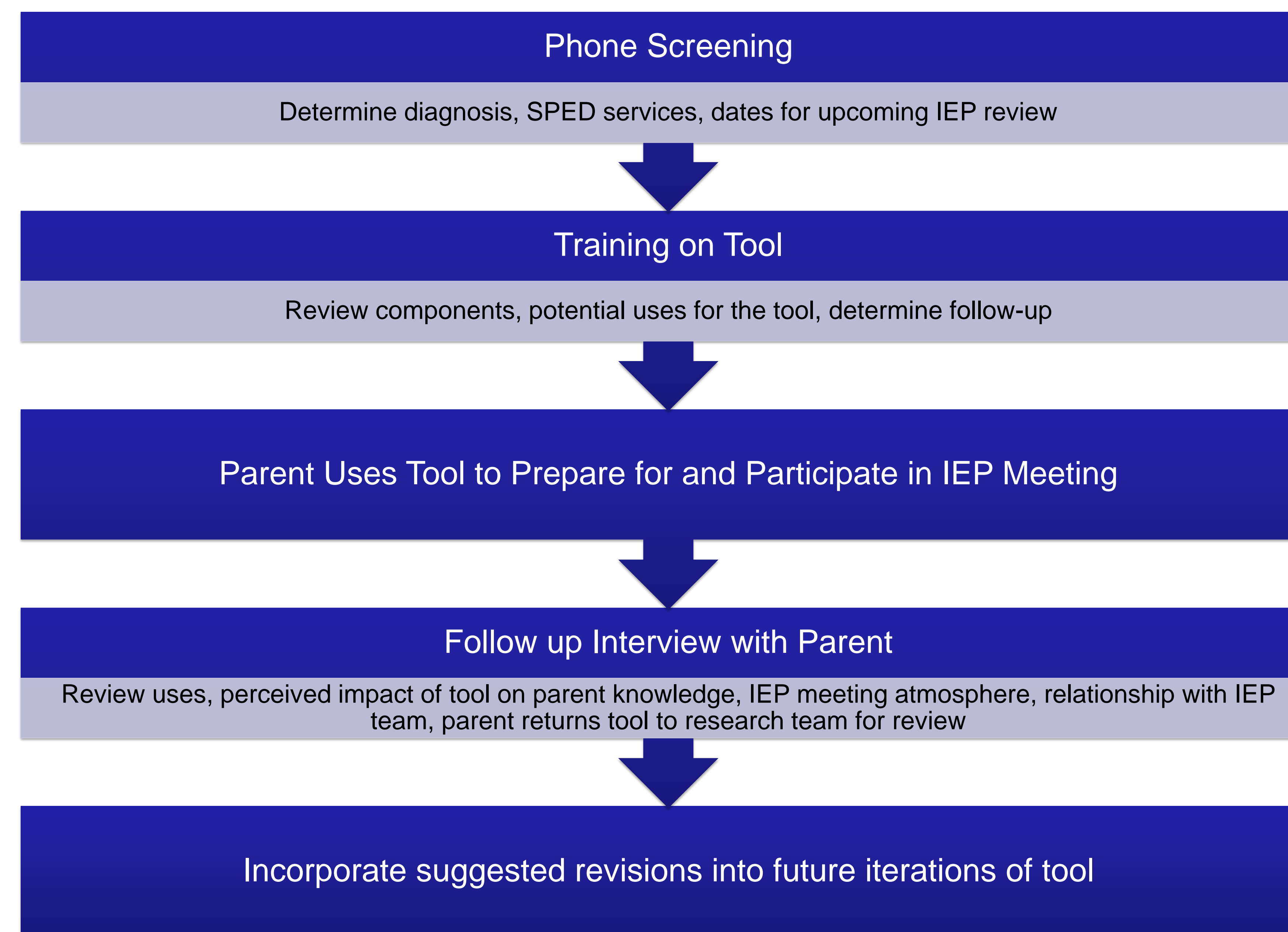
Research Questions:

- What is the perceived impact of using the IEP Decision Aid on parent knowledge and relationship with their child's team?
- What adaptations should be made to the tool to optimize its user-friendliness?

Pilot Participants

- 2 mothers, both white
 - Age of son with autism: kindergarten, 3rd grade
- Child had an autism spectrum diagnosis and received special education services through an urban school district in the Midwest
- IEP Meeting Purposes: annual review and change in placement
- 1 parent able to complete in-person interview, 1 interview completed via phone

Pilot Interview Process



Preliminary Findings

- So far, parents are saying:

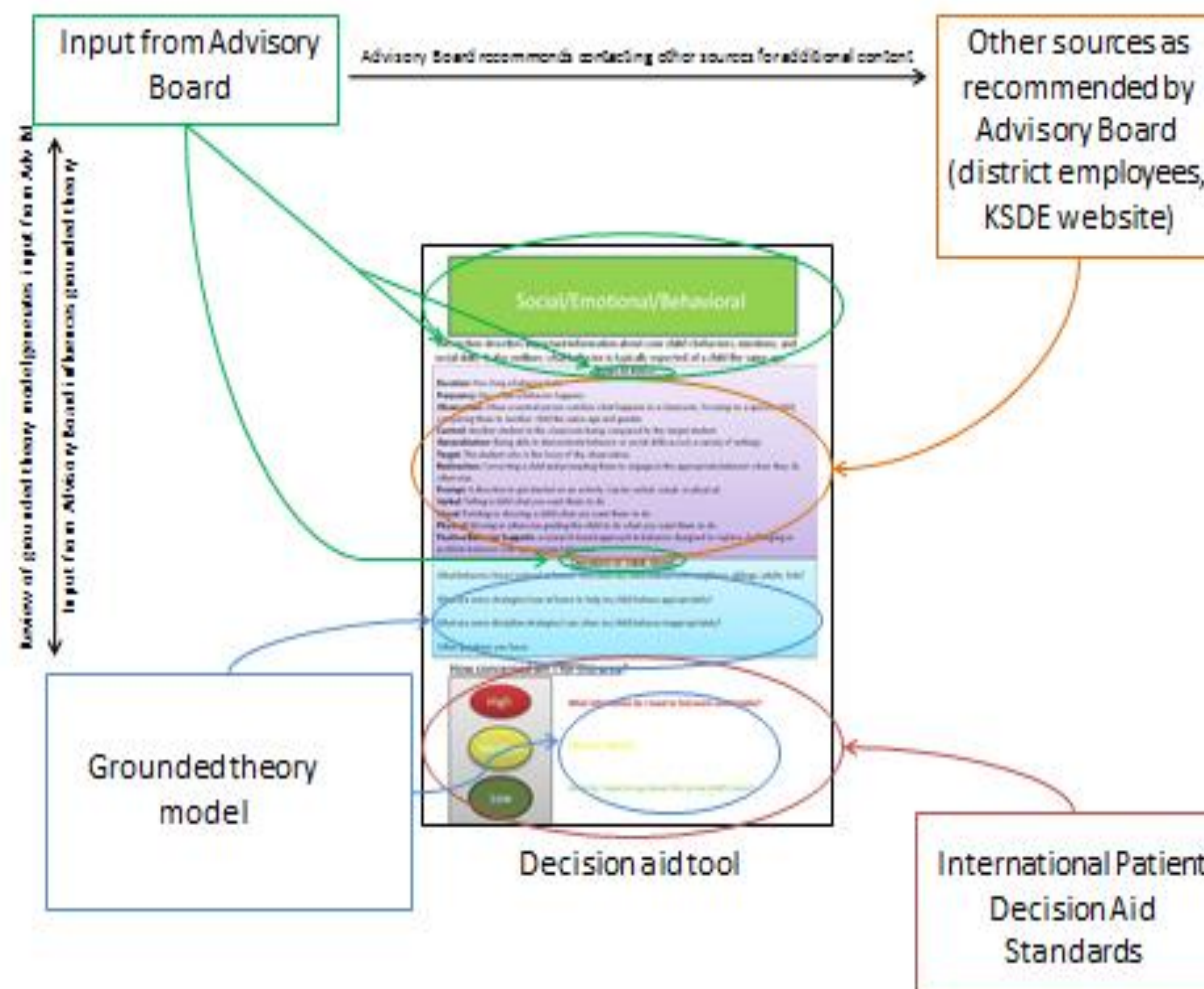
It was a great brainstorming tool.

It kept me on task. It was a very good preparation tool.

It helped with knowing what to say and asking questions.

It helped ...everyone talk to me because I knew what they were talking about.

Components Informing IEP Decision Aid



Discussion

- Parents report lack of knowledge as the greatest barrier to effective decision-making, consistent with existing research (Mitchell & Sloper, 2002)
- Parents participating in this study so far perceived that using this locally-developed tool increased their knowledge of the IEP process and communication with team members.

Future Directions

- Further pilot testing and evaluation of feasibility, as well as impact on measureable variables (ie knowledge, stress, relational variables).
- Expand tool for use in other districts or for students with other types of disabilities in the same district
- Consider ways to make more accessible to potential users

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Blue-Banning, M., Summers, J. A., Frankland, H. C., Nelson, L. L., & Beegle, G. (2004). Dimensions of family and professional partnerships: Constructive guidelines for collaboration. *Exceptional Children*, 70, 167-184. Christenson, S. L., & Sheridan, S. M. (2001). *Schools and families: Creating essential connections for learning*. New York: Guilford Press. Epstein, J. L. (2001). *School, family and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. Gaitan, C. D. (2004). *Involving Latino families in schools: Raising student achievement through home-school partnerships*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. Mitchell, W., & Sloper, P. (2002). Information that informs rather than alienates families with disabled children: Developing a model of good practice. *Health and Social Care in the Community*, 10, 74-81. doi: 10.1046/j.1365-2524.2002.00344.x Rock, M. (2000). Parents as equal partners: Balancing the scales in IEP development. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 32, 30-37. Retrieved from <http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Publications2/TEACHINGExceptionalChildren/default.htm> Schuttler, J.O. (2011, dissertation) The Design of an IEP decision aid: A tool for diverse parents of children with autism. University of Kansas.