

Strengthening the Collaboration between the Home and School in Kaisahan ng Magulang at Anak na May Kapansanan (KAISAKA), Inc. Malate, Manila

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Abstract

This research investigated the home-school collaboration between the parents of children with disabilities and the school called Kaisahan ng Magulang at Anak na May Kapansanan (KAISAKA, Inc.) Malate, Manila, for the school year 2012-2013. It used the qualitative case study design. The following research instruments were used: checklist, rating scale, open-ended questionnaire, and focus group discussions. The study was guided by the theory of Joyce Epstein (1995), "Sphere of Overlapping Influences, Model of Family Involvement." In this theory, Joyce Epstein showed that a high level of success can coordinate and work together to encourage students in their learning and development. This study showed that there was a high level or degree of participation in the collaboration between the parents/relatives and the KAISAKA, Inc. However, these strategies in collaboration need to be strengthened to further help achieve the highest possible levels of learning of students with disabilities. There is a plan of action recommended to further strengthen the collaboration between the parents/relatives and the KAISAKA, Inc.

Keywords: Education, collaboration, family, school, parents, community-based rehabilitation.

The home is the first place where children learn how to read, write, and develop acceptable social values with their parents as primary teachers. When the child grows up, socialization is continued in the school. Educators believe that when parents are involved in the child's education, the child will have a positive learning experience. This involvement must be continuous to ensure that the child, especially a child with disability, will become a productive member of society. One of the aims of this study was to show the importance of collaboration between the parents and the school in the education of children with disabilities to guarantee the full development of the child's potentials.

It is imperative that parents become partners with the teachers in the planning and execution of all learning strategies and activities so that the children learn at their own level of competence. Collaboration is vital to the development of the potentials of the child with disabilities. Not only will the educational setting be more conducive to learning; the child with disabilities will also be better equipped to become a fruitful citizen of society.

Children with disabilities who have not received the proper attention they need have the biggest possibility of failing and eventually stopping their education (Anderson-Butcher, 2004). The family is a very powerful force that can help in the development of a student, especially a student with disability (Singh, 2003). And in collaboration activities, the parents are recognized as important factors (Cowan, Napolitano & Sheridan, 2004).

Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) was initiated by the World Health Organization in the mid-1980s to provide the rehabilitation of all persons with disabilities. A multi-sectoral approach that emphasizes decision-making to achieve a well-rounded personality (Nabis & Motsch, 2008) was implemented to ensure that all sectors work together to produce a functioning society (JICA, UNDP, 2002).

KASAMAKA, Inc. in Malate, Manila uses this strategy. The organization started as KAISAKA, Inc. (Kaisahan ng mga Magulang at Anak na May Kapansanan, Inc.), an outreach program of the Parish of Our Lady of Remedies, Malate, Manila. It was established in 1989 as an organization of parents until it became a foundation in 1996. In 1998 it changed its name to KAISAKA, Inc.

The KAISAKA Inc. is a program of community-based rehabilitation (CBR) for people with disabilities and their families in Malate, Leveriza, San Andres, and Singalong in Metro Manila. The organization has several programs such as rehabilitation, education and training, and capacity building. In partnership with the Catholic Church, KAISAKA, Inc. is the only center that caters to very young children with disabilities in the area. It provides physical therapy, occupational therapy, and Early Intervention Class (EIC). The EIC aims to teach children with disabilities daily life skills such as putting on clothes, doing their toilet, and eating on their own. The EIC is also a training ground in preparation for their Special Education (SpEd) in mainstream education.

The research can serve as a guide in the conduct of future collaborations between home and school for students with disabilities. This would lead the way to the systematic documentation of experiences and thoughts as well as the definition of an effective and efficient implementation of the collaboration of the family and school. In addition, the research results would help teachers and families of persons with disabilities in their search for effective ways of communication, leadership, and decision-making in improving collaboration.

The results of the study can be used as a tool by KAISAKA, Inc. Malate in analyzing its role in the collaboration between family and school. These results can be discussed with the main participants of the study in a forum on the results of the research. Parenthetically, it is for this reason that the study has a version written in Filipino.

This study did not include problems of administration, launching the collaboration, and participation in area work. Information on the collaboration of other organizations or NGOs that give emphasis to the education of children with disabilities, and the views of the children are not included either.

The theory of Joyce Espstein (The Overlapping Sphere of Influence Model of Family Involvement, 1995) has been used as the standard or benchmark in describing collaboration between families and schools (Griffin & Steen, 2010). The theory states that the following factors are needed for successful parent involvement in school activities: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community (leadership).

In this study, as shown in Figure 1, the focal points in collaboration between the parents and school (KAISAKA Inc.) are communication, decision-making, and leadership. The main purpose of this study was to strengthen collaboration between the families and the school (KAISAKA, Inc.) to facilitate the effective development of students with disabilities.

The following are the three important factors that guided the study:

1. the home, where the students with disabilities live and learn the basic ways of learning and interaction;
2. the school, considered as the second home of students with disabilities and where the consciousness, skills, and knowledge are honed; and
3. the collaboration between home and school.

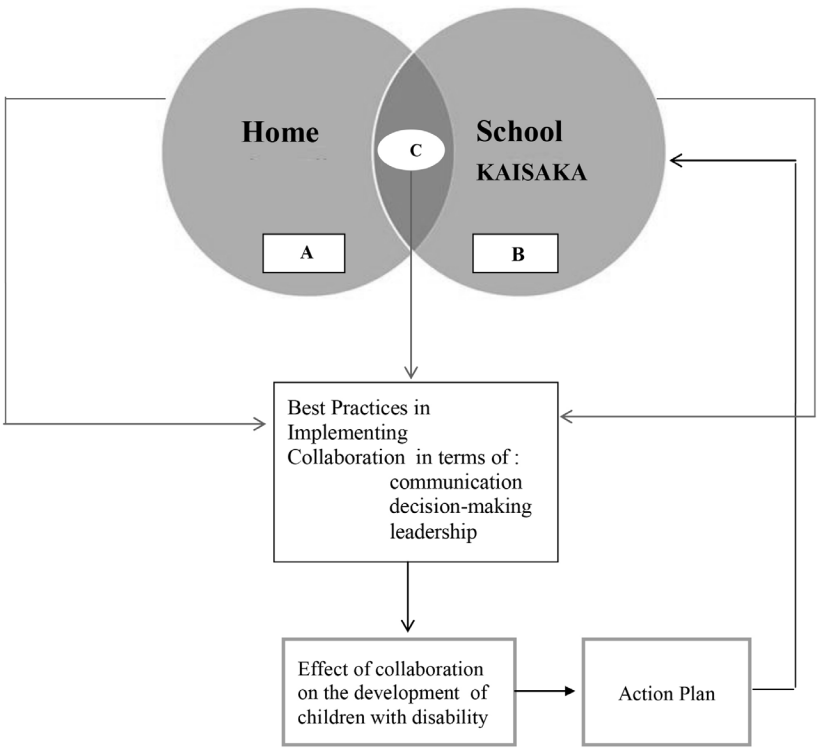


Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework*

The relationship among the given factors is the basis for consolidating the best practices and procedures in the collaboration between home and school. Collaboration is important in the learning process for a child with disabilities to achieve the highest possible level of learning.

Method

This research was conducted during the academic year 2012-2013 using the qualitative case study method. Both qualitative and quantitative designs were applied. The qualitative case study helps in exploring an event in its context with the data taken from different backgrounds (Calderon, 1993).

This research used the concepts from the theory of Joyce Epstein (1995) "Overlapping Sphere of Influences – Model of Family Involvement," which states that the family, home, and community are factors that affect student learning and guide the collaboration between the family and the school.

Participants

Purposive sampling was used to determine the number and nature of the participants. There were 10 participants: 7 parents and 3 relatives (2 grandmothers and 1 uncle) of the children with disabilities who are studying at KAISAKA, Inc. Of the ten participants, one is male and nine are female. Also included were the two teachers of EIC. In addition, some key persons – the students of the Early Intervention Class, the parish priest, the Coordinator of the project, the physical therapist, and the president of KAISAKA, Inc. – were interviewed to gather additional information and verify earlier findings.

Data Sources

The research used six (6) primary sources of data. Three research instruments – Participation Checklist For Parents/Family Members; Rating Scale for Views of Parents/Relatives on the Collaboration with Teachers adapted from the same source; and Rating Scale for Views of Teachers on the Collaboration with Parents/Relatives – were adapted from "Consultation, Collaboration, and Team Work for Students with Special Needs" by Dettmer, Thurson, and Dyck (2005). The other three sources of data were semi-open-ended questionnaires, Focus

Group Discussion (FGD), and “Anecdotal Record” or the records of observations made by the researcher when activities were conducted. The secondary sources of research data were the logbook of the Center, the manual of KAISAKA, Inc., the minutes of meetings and special activities, and the registration records.

To ensure the validity of the sources of data, experts in Special Education, Sociology, and the Filipino language assessed and analyzed them before they were used on the participants. A pre-test was conducted in Lingap Kapansanan ng Bagong Silang or LIKASBA-CBR, Bagong Silang, Novaliches using the same tools for validation. The suggestions of the experts together with the weaknesses found in the pre-test conducted improved the configuration of the research tools.

The Checklist for Participation of Parents/Family Members contains 15 statements on parents’ participation in the learning and welfare of their children/relatives. The ten respondents placed a check mark beside the activities they would wish to participate in. The Rating Scale for the Views of Parents/Relatives on the Collaboration with Teachers has 14 statements showing the views of the parents on decision-making, leadership, and communication.* In both rating scales, the respondents placed a check mark on the columns that describe their agreement with particular statements. They chose from 5-Always; 4-Often; 3-Occasionally; 2-Rarely; and 1-No.

Mean ratings were computed from the scores obtained from the participants of the study. The scores on the rating scale were interpreted as follows:

- 5- Always (the maximum score that shows complete agreement);
- 4- Often (indicating agreement);
- 3- Occasionally (median score that shows partial agreement);
- 2- Rarely (low score that shows disagreement); and
- 1- No (the lowest score that shows complete disagreement).

*The Rating Scale for Views of Teachers on the Collaboration with Parents/Relatives has 16 statements describing the views of teachers on decision-making, leadership, and communication.

The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was used in the research to discuss the different opinions and views of the parents about the factors that strengthen the collaboration between parents and teachers

of KAISAKA Inc. on communication, leadership, and decision-making. Eight (8) mothers participated in the FGD conducted at the offices of KAISAKA, Inc. The prepared guide questions served as follow-up questions given in story style. The information, thoughts, insights, and some issues gathered through open discussion were duly recorded. The answers to the FGD were used to find a pattern, non-uniformity, contrast or variation on their beliefs, attitudes and practices related to decision-making, leadership, and communication in the Early Intervention Class (EIC). The answers were also used in exploring the meaning of the data from the checklist and rating scale that could not be explained using statistical techniques.

The semi-structured and open-ended questionnaires for the interviews are composed of three (3) parts – structured questions on the profile of the participants (socio-economic data); the semi-structured questions about KAISAKA, Inc.; and a set of questions on the thoughts, opinions, and views of the participants on the effectiveness of the collaboration between them on communication, leadership, and decision-making. The open-ended questionnaires were also used in the interviews with the key-persons: the Parish Priest, the President of KAISAKA, Inc., the Coordinator of the project, and the in-house physical therapist for validation and further information.

Data obtained from the semi-open-ended questionnaires in the interviews were described and analyzed based on the analytical requirements of each item in the interview, including the computation and tabulation of frequencies and ranking. The views, opinions, concerns, and issues, as well as other statements were also recorded to validate their similarities and patterns. The other records and documents that showed participation and collaboration between parents and teachers were presented through discussions. The other documents were used as addendum and evidence for Triangulation.

In the succeeding sections, the contents of at least one table were translated into English (see Appendix A). As for the other tables, the contents were not translated to retain the essence of the participants' original responses.

Results

Participants’ Profile

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the caregivers of the students included in the study.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Participants (Tagapangalaga)

Mga Tagapangalaga	Edad	Kasarian	Katayuang Sibil	Relihiyon	Hanapbuhay	Edukasyon	Blg.ng anak na PWD	Relasyon sa PWDs	Hanapbuhay ng asawa	Tirahan
1	25	B	May asawa	Katoliko	Wala	High School	1	Anak	Pedicab driver	Nakikitira sa kamag-anak
2	54	B	May asawa	Born Again	Wala	2 nd year college	1	Apo	Wala	Nakikitira sa kamag-anak
3	20	L	Binata	Katoliko	Wala	High School	1	Pamangkin	Wala	Nakikitira sa kamag-anak
4	46	B	May asawa	Katoliko	D. selling	High School	4	Anak	Magsasaka	Nakikitira sa kamag-anak
5	43	B	May asawa	Katoliko	Wala	College graduate	1	Anak	Tindero	Sariling bahay
6	47	B	May asawa	Katoliko	Wala	High School	1	Anak	Empleyado	Sariling bahay
7	53	B	Walang asawa	Katoliko	Nagtitinda	High School	1	Apo	Tindero	Sariling bahay
8	35	B	May asawa	Katoliko	Nagtitinda- karne	College Graduate	1	Anak	Empleyado	Sariling bahay
9	43	B	May asawa	Katoliko	Wala	College Graduate	1	Anak	Empleyado	Sariling bahay
10	31	B	May asawa	Katoliko	Wala	High School	1	Anak	Tindero	Sariling bahay

The participants ranged from 25 to 55 years old and came from very disparate backgrounds in terms of education, economic status, and residence. Majority of them were Catholics. Only two of them were not parents of the children with disabilities.

There were two (2) teachers conducting the EIC classes – both married and Catholic. One was the regular teacher who handled the class every Monday and the other one handled the Wednesday class. They were “permanent volunteers,” that is, they were permanently employed as teachers, but were given a monthly volunteer allowance. However, they were enjoying the benefits of Social Security Services (SSS), and had been sent to trainings and seminars to update their knowledge and skills in Special Education.

One teacher, whose daughter was a beneficiary of the KAISAKA, Inc., had a Bachelor of Science in Secretarial Administration degree from the Philippine Christian University Manila. The other teacher was a graduate of Hotel and Restaurant Management from the Polytechnic University of the Philippines.

There were thirteen (13) students in the EIC program of the KAISAKA Inc. for the school year 2012-2013. Their ages ranged from 3 to 13 years. Of the 13, six had autism, 4 had Down Syndrome, one was hearing-impaired, one had global mental delay, and one had multiple disabilities. Of the 13, one had been in the project for 5 years, another for 2 years, and the other one for 3 years. The rest had been in the program for one year.

Views and Thoughts of the Carers and Teachers

Table 2 shows the views and opinions of the parents/relatives (carers) of students of KAISAKA, Inc. These have been taken from the questionnaires, interviews and Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

Table 2. *Pananaw at Saloobin ng mga Tagapangalaga sa Kolaborasyon sa Pagitan ng KAISAKA, Inc.*

Pananaw	Saloobin
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May pagpapahalaga at malasakit sa mga PWDs • Tumutulong at gumagabay sa mga magulang sa pangangalaga sa mga batang may kapansanan • Malaki ang naitutulong ng KAISAKA, Inc. sa programa ng EIC sa pag-unlad at pagkatuto ng aming mga anak • Lahat ay nakikiisa; may pakikisama at kooperasyon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masaya ang relasyon ng bawat isa • Maayos at organisado ang lahat ng pamamaraan ng KAISAKA, Inc. • Pakiramdam ko may pamilya ako sa KAISAKA, Inc. • Walang pangamba ang bawat isa na ibahagi ang sarili • Magaan ang pakiramdam ng bawat isa sa KAISAKA, Inc.

In validating the views and opinions of the parents/relatives, FGD was held for them to freely express and explain these views and opinions. The results of the survey and FGD show a positive outlook in the attitude of the parents/relatives on the collaboration between them and KAISAKA, Inc.

Table 3 also describes the views and opinions of teachers on the collaboration between KAISAKA, Inc. and the parents/relatives during the implementation of the EIC program.

Table 3. *Mga Pananaw at Saloobin ng mga Guro sa Kolaborasyon*

Guro	Pananaw	Saloobin
Both teachers	<div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Malaki ang naitutulong ng KAISAKA sa magulang at tagapangalaga ng mga batang may kapansanan sa pamamagitan ng pagtuturo ng mga kasanayan at konsepto kung papaano aalagaan ang kanilang mga anak/kamag-anak na may kapansanan</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Nakapagbibigay ng pag-asa sa pamilyang may kapansanan at mga anak o kamag-anak</div></div>	<div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Masaya, kasi nakatutulong kami kahit papaano</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Nakatutuha kasi pag nakita mong may improvement yong mga bata, kasama ka sa naging dahilan ng kanyang pag-unlad</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Masaya, may pagkakaisa</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Masaya dahil nakilala ang bawat isa</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Nagagalak dahil nasusunod ang bawat itinuturo at isinasakatuparan ng mga magulang</div></div>
Teacher A	<div><div>•May maayos na ugnayan sa pamilya at programa</div><div>•Naisasaayos ang layunin sa maayos na paraan</div></div>	<div><div><input type="checkbox"/> <i>May satisfaction</i> kasi nakikita mo ang pag-unlad ng mga bata at ang pagtutulongan ng mga magulang</div></div>
Teacher B	<div><div>•Mas organisado ngayon at aktibo ang mga magulang</div><div>•Mas mabilis na naisasagawa ang mga <i>activities</i> ng EIC</div></div>	

According to the teachers, the collaboration between KAISAKA, Inc. and the parents/relatives of children with disabilities had a great impact on the learning process. The various activities in KAISAKA, Inc. had helped build the parents’/relatives’ self-confidence in caring for their children. The organization had become a forum where views and thoughts are spontaneously exchanged. Continuing the lessons learned in the classroom to their homes had helped the continuous development and improvement of the children with disabilities.

The parish priest and the in-house physical therapist of KAISAKA, Inc. asserted that the programs of KAISAKA Inc. were properly implemented and well-organized to meet the needs not only of the children with disabilities but also of their parents/relatives.

For the school year 2012-2013, various activities such as regular meetings for case conferences and other special activities were conducted, which illustrate the degree or level of participation of the parents/relatives. The figure below shows that the parents’/relatives’ actively attended most of the regular meetings of KAISAKA, Inc.

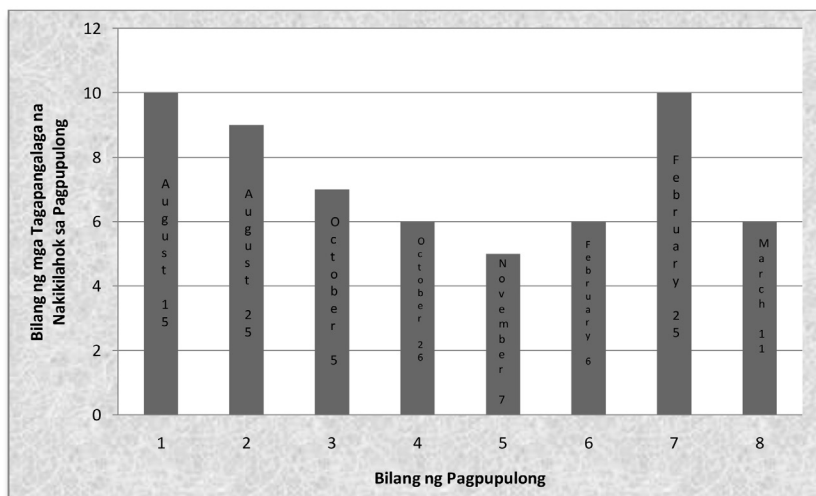


Figure 2. *Bilang ng mga tagapangalaga na nakikilahok sa pagpupulong*

The figure below shows the attendance of the parents/relatives during the six (6) special activities for the school year 2012-2013

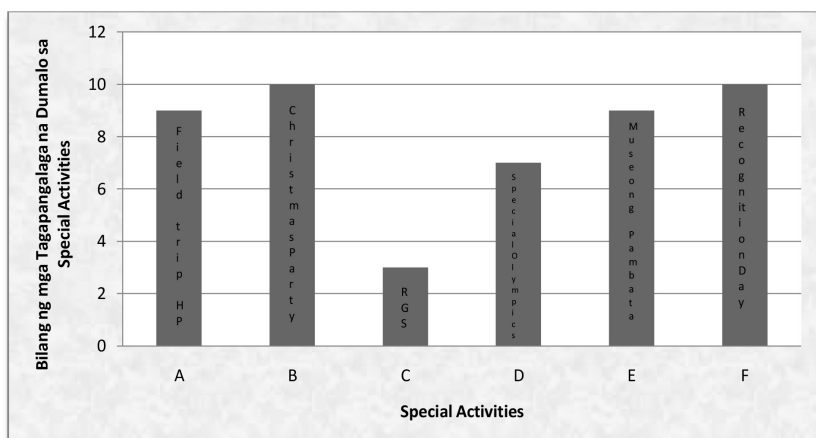


Figure 3. *Bilang ng mga tagapangalaga na dumalo sa Special Activities*

On the basis of the checklist used to identify the activities, the parents/relatives would like to participate in as part of the

communication, decision-making, and leadership components of collaboration, all the respondents chose to help their child at home. The activity they would least want to participate in was sharing personal experiences.

During the FGD with the parents/relatives, the level or degree of their participation in the collaboration with KAISAKA, Inc. was validated. They said that they were given opportunities to participate in the various activities conducted by KAISAKA, Inc. Whenever there was a limited number of participants or invitations, the parents/relatives followed a rotation of assignments in attending the activities. They would participate because they wanted to know what was happening to their children inside and outside the classroom.

Component of collaboration: Communication

In communicating with the parents, modern technology such as telephones, cell phones, texting and the internet (Facebook) was used together with home-to-home visitation, classroom-based consultation, case conference, and sending out letters. Home visits, texting, case conference, regular meetings and consultations were the most effective strategies for interaction or collaboration with the parents/relative of the students of EIC.

These strategies were validated during the FGD with the parents/relatives. They said that it was easier to receive messages through texting. Home visits were also effective because they could have personal interaction with the teachers. All of them agreed that the fastest way of communication was through texting.

However, they also mentioned that there were obstacles affecting their participation such as the method of sending the message, the way the message was communicated, and the promptness of the information.

Component of collaboration: Decision-making

On decision-making, KAISAKA, Inc. conducts regular meetings of the EIC, the Exe-com and the General Assembly. These serve as the forums for the parents/relatives and teachers to discuss and make decisions on the learning process of the children with disabilities attending the Early Intervention Class program.

These practices and strategies were validated during the FGDs conducted. The participants said that decision-making was the responsibility of the teachers, the program coordinator, and the leadership of KAISAKA, Inc. The program coordinator decides for the students of EIC on out-of-school activities. The teachers decide on classroom activities and the lessons. The teachers require the active participation of the parents/relatives in the decision-making process. Sometimes, the leadership's perceived faulty decision-making and late or inconsistent information dissemination adversely affect the participation of the parents/relatives.

Component of collaboration: Leadership

Each participant has a role in collaboration. The parents/relatives sometimes take the lead in some tasks or activities. They also volunteer as chaperons. For them, volunteerism is an attitude that helps them further strengthen collaboration. However there are some obstacles in the leadership system. These are the neutrality or passivity of the members of the organization and the poor attendance during the General Assembly. This is evident when the leader is the one causing confusion in the organization.

Consolidation of Collaboration

The following table shows the suggested activities or plan of action to further strengthen the collaboration between the parents and KAISAKA, Inc.:

Table 4. *Mga Rekomendasyon at Suhesyon sa Pagpapatatag ng KAISAKA, Inc.*

Mga Erya (Areas)	Rekomendasyon/Mungkahi
Komunikasyon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Magkaroon ng team building ang guro at mga magulang lalo na ngayon dahil maraming mga bagong magulang, e.g self-orientation ✓ Kausapin ko ang simbahan kung saan <i>under</i> ang KAISAKA,Inc.para sa ikabubuti ng mga bata ✓ Makipag-usap sa mga nakakataas,<i>director</i> ng ospital at kura paroko para sa pagbabago
Pamumuno	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Wala, may eleksyon naman at kontento po ako sa pamamalakad nila, always be a good leaders ✓ Kontento po ako sa pamamalakad ng school para sa anak ko

	<div><div>✓ Kontento po ako</div><div>✓ Magtulungan ang mga miyembro at opisyaes</div><div>✓ No comment, <i>I am satisfied</i></div><div>✓ Wala po akong masasabi, Ok naman po sila</div><div>✓ Magkaroon ng pagpapatatag ng pag-unlad ng mga magulang</div><div>✓ Aktibo at may pagkukusa ang mga magulang pero walang silang activities, kailangan na magbigay ng productive activities ang KAISAKA, Inc.</div><div>✓ Magkaroon ng gawain para sa Advocacy Initiatives</div></div>
Pagdedesisyon	<div><div>✓ Kailangan ang patuloy na pagbibigay ng mga training sa mga tagapangalaga</div></div>
Iba pang mungkahi: Lugar	<div><div>✓ Ang lugar po ay masyadong maliit para sa mga bata, ilipat siya sa mas malaking lugar</div><div>✓ Mas maluwag na space para sa pagdarausan ng mga therapy ng mga bata</div></div>
Programa	<div><div>✓ Sa ibang lugar ang pagtuturo</div><div>✓ Gusto ko na madagdagan ng speech therapy para sa mga batang nangangailangan ng speech therapy</div><div>✓ Magkaroon ng tatlong araw ng speech therapy</div><div>✓ Lalo pang dagdagan ang mga activities para sa mga magulang at mag-aaral</div><div>✓ Magkaroon ng team building ang guro at mga magulang lalo na ngayon dahil maraming mga bagong magulang e.g self-orientation</div></div>
Staffing	<div><div>✓ Maglaan ng isang araw para sa <i>case conference</i></div><div>✓ Magdagdag ng staff</div></div>

Each participant has different opinions on how to improve collaboration between parents and the school. However, all the participants agree that collaboration is important to help in the development of the children.

Discussion

This research is on strengthening home-school collaboration between the parents of children with disabilities and the Kaisahan ng Magulang at Anak na May Kapansanan (KAISAKA, Inc.), Malate, Manila for the school year 2012-2013. There were 10 participants in the study (parents/relatives of the students in KAISAKA, Inc.) of whom 9 were women. The ages of the participants range from 20 to 55, the economically productive years. Seven participants are unemployed or without sources of income.

Although the teachers' skills and commitment to the welfare of the children cannot be underestimated, their academic preparation was limited. The short courses, seminars, and forums that they attend were not enough to help achieve the highest level of competence and potential of the students. However, their actual experience in teaching children with disabilities had helped significantly in the children's development.

There were 13 students with various disabilities and ages for the school year 2012-2013. They attend Early Intervention Classes (EIC) twice a week. There are no formal studies conducted. ADL or Activities for Daily Living is the basic curriculum content of EIC. The children were taught skills that would help them in their day-to-day life.

The parents/relatives of children with disabilities and the teachers were united in the belief that KAISAKA, Inc. values or gives importance to children with disabilities. The teachers would always communicate with the parents about the children's performance in class and share strategies that could help increase the children's level of learning.

The parents/relatives were given the opportunity to participate in decision-making related to learning and development of their children, but they have great confidence in the teachers and they do not actively participate in decision-making. However, this limits their participation in the learning activities of the children. Participation in the decision-making process is an important feature for collaboration to succeed. Nevertheless, a successful collaboration is not necessarily made by all participants sharing equally in decision-making (Friend & Cook, 2003).

The parents/relatives agree that the teachers always coordinate with them by sending out messages about the status of their children and trying to match the schedule of meetings and conferences of the Parent-Teacher Assembly (PTA) with their schedule. The parents/relatives are often given the opportunity to give feedback to the teachers about any changes in the learning of students and about the problems of students with their teachers.

The parents/relatives showed satisfaction with the collaboration taking place in KAISAKA, Inc. There is an amiable relationship among them. Both the parents/relatives and the teachers acknowledge the important role of parents in the learning process of the students. The

teachers agreed that the decision on what the students need to learn is very important and that attention and response are needed from the feedback given by the parents/relatives. The feedback system is one way of strengthening the relationship or collaboration between parents/relatives and teachers. Friend and Cook (2003) showed that each interaction of the participants in collaboration is important because they show what steps to take to reach the goal of collaboration.

Although the parents/relatives often recognized and respected the competence/ability of teachers in caring for children/relatives, they would have problems communicating with the teachers because of previous experiences. This supports the study done by Dempsey-Hoover and Walker (2002) which shows that a past negative experience of teachers and school staff has an effect on the collaboration activities. There are also obstacles in communicating with the family or parents/relatives of students. The study conducted by Dempsey-Hoover and Walker (2002) also verified that the limited education of parents, financial insecurity, and poverty are barriers to successful collaboration.

In KAISAKA, Inc., the participation and cooperation of each member is important to ensure the success of their activities and projects. Their strength and presence during a project/task become part of the unity and stability of the organization. The lack of funding will not be a barrier if everyone will work together and actively participate in all activities. In collaboration, sharing in the work and responsibility is necessary for the success of a given task (Kaisaka, Inc. Manual (1998), Malate, Manila Philippines).

The Level or Degree of Participation of Parents/Relatives in Collaboration

In all the meetings held in the school year 2012-2013, there was active participation among the parents/relatives. The parents/relatives were able to communicate and clarify with the teachers what they wanted done in relation to the learning process of the students. The parents/relatives sometimes stayed after the meetings to talk to each other and the teachers. Based on the study by Raffaele and Knoff (1999), the collaboration between home and school is more effective when the parents are empowered through a positive and significant two-way communication.

During the meetings, decisions on the learning process were made. Fiedler, (1999) said that all participants in collaboration should take part in the decision-making process, even though each one has his or her own responsibilities. This view is not strongly evident in the study done by McClain (2006) which suggests that there are times when parents do not want to get involved in decision-making because they believe that the teacher knows what is appropriate for students. In the same manner, the parents of KAISAKA, Inc., have full confidence in the teachers' ability so that it is easier for them to defer to the decisions made by teachers for the development of students.

In collaboration, it is important that all participants share the same goal as seen in this study where the parents/relatives expressed determination to attend activities relevant to their children's development. In each of the special activities conducted by KAISAKA, Inc. the parents/relatives cooperated and participated willingly.

In KAISAKA, Inc., the teacher and the coordinator are the leaders in the organized activities. They develop protocols/guidelines, resolve conflict resolution, and assign tasks to each of the members.

Volunteerism is the act of giving one's time and skills unconditionally. This is an important factor for the success of collaboration. In Epstein's theory, volunteerism is one of the most important factors for a successful collaboration. In KAISAKA, Inc. volunteerism is apparent in the list of activities parents/relatives want to join or participate in.

Communication in Collaboration

In Epstein's "Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence," communication needs to be effective, appropriate, timely, and characterized by a dual flow of delivery of the message to ensure collaboration. For fast and systematic delivery, the teachers of KAISAKA, Inc. would use different techniques to deliver messages and updates on the development of the EIC students. Methods such as the use of mobile phones/telephones, texting and internet (Facebook), classroom-based consultations, home-to-home visitations, letters and case conferences are utilized. The use of modern technology is an effective means of communication between parents/relative and teachers. It is faster and more effective. Demsey-Hoover and Walker (2002) showed in their study that parents' participation increases

when they are informed of the status of their children, when their contributions are appreciated, and when definite solutions are offered to help their children.

Aside from modern technology, KAISAKA, Inc. uses the monthly case conference where the child's development and progress is discussed. This is also the time when parents and teachers share their experiences about the children and air out their feelings of frustration, doubt and delight about their learning. In the article by Raffaele and Knoff (1999), it is said that it is important to consider the source and the factors that affect the relationship between families and schools such as poverty, limited education of the parents, and their cultural origins.

Another method is the monthly home-to-home or area visitation where the teachers visit the students to see their actual situation and to follow up on the use at home of the skills and knowledge learned in school. Home visits are effective because they create bonding moments between parents/relatives and the teacher through the personal information they share.

There are meetings or classroom-based consultations conducted as a medium for feedback on and discussion of the problems or issues of the children with disabilities. Letters and/or text messages are sent out to the parents. However, sending out letters proved to be less effective than texting where response is immediate.

To ensure that the role of parents in the learning process of the children is given due importance, the Classroom-Based Consultation – Home Program is conducted where the class activity not finished by the child is continued at home. The parents/relatives are informed at the end of the class to continue or reinforce the activity at home. Based on studies done by Raffaele and Knoff (1999), the collaboration between home and school can be effective if the parents are given power through significant positive communication.

Epstein (1995) agrees that external influences or factors (home, school and community) work together to develop successfully the academic learning and development of a student. In the EIC Program the different methods used to deliver messages are an important factor in the success of the collaboration between the parents/relatives of students with disabilities and KAISAKA, Inc.

Decision making in Collaboration

Decision making as a factor in collaboration is a shared responsibility. The family has to be part of all decisions that affect the educational program of a student (Dettmer, Thurson & Dyck, 2005). Decision making in collaboration requires that the role of each participant be considered. The decision of each one is related to and has an impact on the outcome of a project.

In KAISAKA, Inc., the bi-annual General Assembly is a forum where decisions for the organization are made. The Early Intervention Class (EIC) is handled by a teacher assigned by the General Assembly. Funding of the program is from the Stichting Lilliane Fonds Foundation (SLF). Although KAISAKA, Inc. is one of the programs of the Social Services of the Parish of Our Lady of Remedies, the parish does not decide for KAISAKA, Inc. but the organization is expected to cooperate and participate in the activities of the parish. The program coordinator ensures a smooth and systematic collaboration between the parish and the organization.

In collaboration, decision making is an important factor in the learning of students. The parents and other family members of different economic and socio-political backgrounds must be included (Epstein, 1995). The ExeCom of KAISAKA, Inc. is the body that decides on organizational matters such as fund raising, membership, and administration. The teachers and the program coordinator decide on the educational activities, special activities, and referrals. The EIC has a set of officers for the academic year 2012-2013 that fast tracks decision-making on matters related to the students' development.

Although members have their own responsibilities and tasks, they do not lose responsibility in making a decision (Fiedler, 1999). Although KAISAKA, Inc. uses various methods or strategies in decision-making such as regular meetings of the parents/relatives of the EIC, EXECOM conferences, and General Assembly of KAISAKA, Inc., the teachers have a greater role in making decisions about the learning of students.

Leadership in Collaboration

The leaders of KAISAKA, Inc. are elected at the first General Assembly of the year. The members elect 15 members to compose the Board of Trustees from where the Executive Committee or EXECOM, and chairpersons and members of various committees are chosen. These committees are Rehabilitation, Education, Networking and Capability Building.

The Early Intervention Class as a program under the Education Committee has its own leaders who are the teachers' partners in disseminating information to the parents/relatives of children with disabilities. The president of the EIC is the main coordinator for special events. Only the president can call for a meeting even if there are issues that need speedy resolution. This system limits the participation of the parents in collaboration. It would be more helpful in solving a problem if this is discussed by everyone concerned.

A technique used by KAISAKA, Inc. is volunteerism. This is the sharing of time and skills and even financial assistance without expecting any compensation. Volunteerism is an important factor in collaboration (Epstein, 1995). The parents/relatives volunteer for activities such as chaperoning the children, creating designs for the bulletin boards at the center, and organizing parties.

Friend and Cook (2003) mentioned that for a collaboration to be successful, projects must be clear to each member. In EIC, meetings are usually carried out when there are no classes or when the members are available. This becomes a limitation because not all members can be simultaneously present at the time and on the day agreed upon. Such a system sometimes delays decision-making, and keeps members from carrying out plans for collaboration.

Conclusion

There are many factors for a collaboration to succeed. The external and internal factors may influence the success of learning. Communication, volunteerism, learning at home, decision making, and collaboration in the community are just some of the factors that must be considered in collaboration (Epstein, 1995). Thus, each participant must be creative in his/her participation.

There is a high level or degree of participation in all activities of KAISAKA, Inc. as seen in the number of attendees during meetings and special activities. There are a variety of methods used for an orderly and systematic collaboration. Texting and the use of modern technology are the best ways of delivering messages in support of collaboration. In decision-making, the conference is the most effective medium for making and executing decisions. The Parent-Teacher Association of the EIC paved the way for better interactions between parents/relatives and teachers. Although the current practices of collaboration are effective, there are overlapping factors that can affect the systematic functioning of collaboration. These are differences in family backgrounds, culture, economic status, and educational attainment of the parents/relatives. The richness of actual and practical experience would help the current collaboration.

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