Family Interview

Katie Kerian

SPED 854

Department of Education, University of Kansas

Professor Robinson, Ph.D.

June 36, 2023

A Family Interview

This interview took place at the school where I currently teach. I learned that the school counselor I work with had a son who had learning disabilities and who had switched private schools with hopes of finding the right support for him and the family. This switch of schools happened at the start of the school year. Emily and I sat down for the interview the last week of May just as the school year was ending. The following is a reflection on what Emily, the mother and coworker, shared in our discussion.

The first question I asked Emily was how she viewed and described the role of the family when collaborating with educational personnel. Her response was straightforward. Emily replied that the family's role was, "to work together with teachers and mirror the support teachers are providing at home." In her case, this was primarily academic support for her son. This was the response I was expecting from Emily; however, the way she phrased her answer caused me to pause and think. Her use of the term "mirror" is an interesting way to view the partnership and collaboration between schools and families. Not only is the idea of a mirror a way to view this partnership, but it also illustrates the idea that there is some agreement between the education professionals and the family on how to support the students. I think this view was more common in the education profession, perhaps some of the barriers between professionals and families would start to disappear.

I then asked Emily what have been two or three of the biggest challenges her family has faced when working with educational professionals. She responded that the challenges were the lack of communication for the school, her son was not given tools to help him where he needs support, and the study skills were not individualized to meet the student's personal

needs. Emily noted that these struggles were primarily at the school they left a year ago. This caught my attention for a couple of reasons. First because teaching students individualized study skills is much of what I do at the private school I teach at. The second reason this caught my attention was because many times the students that are first to leave private schools are those with learning disabilities that are not effectively being supported. Then I asked Emily what successes her family has experienced while collaborating with educational professionals. Emily stated that after switching private schools at the start of this school year, her son is eating and sleeping better, has a better relationship with his teachers, and gets excited when he does well. She said he seems happier overall.

Finally, I asked Emily what insight or advice she has for educational personnel. Emily responded with one word: communication. I asked her to specify what she was seeking communication about. Emily replied that she was seeking "communication regarding what is seen academically on a daily basis." Emily also stated that teachers need to realize that their words can affect the kids in their classroom, and the students take these words with them as they grow up and continue their education. I think this is a good reminder for all educational professionals. Not only those who teach students with learning disabilities, but also students who don't struggle to learn.