

Reducing Barriers to Special Education for Spanish-Speaking Latine Families

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Abstract

Special education serves as a critical framework for ensuring educational access and equity for students with disabilities; however, navigating this system presents significant challenges for many families, particularly Latinx families who are monolingual Spanish speakers. Language barriers, systemic oppression, and power imbalances often limit families' access to information, meaningful participation, and advocacy within special education processes. Grounded in the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Intersectionality, Power Analysis, and Anti-racism, this presentation introduces a Spanish-language podcast series designed to increase parental knowledge of special education, procedural rights, and available resources in Colorado. The podcast seeks to reduce linguistic and informational barriers, empower families to advocate for their children, and address inequities rooted in structural and institutional practices. By centering intersectional identities and lived experiences, the project promotes inclusive engagement and challenges dominant power structures that marginalize Latinx families. This intervention not only supports families in navigating special education systems but also provides school districts with a tool to better understand community needs, foster culturally responsive practices, and advance justice-oriented educational reform.

Keywords: special education, Spanish-speaking Latine families, family advocacy, educational equity, parent engagement

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Introduction

Special education provides the legal and educational framework for ensuring that students with disabilities receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Central to IDEA is the recognition that families are equal members of the educational team and have the right to participate in decisions regarding the identification, evaluation, placement, and services provided to their children. While these legal protections establish an expectation of meaningful family engagement, navigating the special education process remains challenging for many families. These challenges are particularly pronounced for Spanish-speaking Latine families who experience language barriers, limited access to culturally responsive information, and systemic inequities that restrict meaningful participation in educational decision-making (Alba et al., 2022; Burke et al., 2020).

Research consistently demonstrates that language is one of the most significant barriers affecting family participation in special education. Spanish-speaking Latine families report difficulties communicating with educators, understanding educational terminology, accessing documents in their preferred language, and advocating effectively for their children during Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings (Alba et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2018). Although schools commonly provide interpreters during formal meetings, interpretation alone does not eliminate systemic barriers. Families continue to report feeling disempowered, excluded from decision-making, and uncertain about their procedural rights, resulting in unequal participation despite federal protections (Angell & Solomon, 2017; Burke et al., 2020).

These challenges extend beyond language differences and reflect broader structural inequities embedded within educational systems. Historically, students with disabilities and students from historically marginalized racial and ethnic communities have experienced unequal access to educational opportunities. Although legislation such as IDEA significantly expanded educational rights, disparities continue to exist in referral practices, identification, disciplinary outcomes, and access to services (Colorado Department of Education, 2017; Davila, 2015). These inequities are particularly evident among culturally and linguistically diverse students, who continue to experience both overrepresentation and underrepresentation in special education depending on disability category and local educational practices (Curran & Hulse, 2021).

Research further indicates that many Latine families possess limited knowledge regarding the special education process and their legal rights within IDEA (Burke et al., 2020). Families have described feeling intimidated during IEP meetings because educators are viewed as experts, while parents often lack familiarity with educational terminology, procedures, and available resources (Mortier et al., 2021). This imbalance contributes to unequal power relationships in which families may hesitate to ask questions, challenge recommendations, or advocate for services because they fear negative consequences for their children or feel their voices are not valued (Angell & Solomon, 2017). Consequently, family participation may become procedural rather than collaborative, limiting opportunities to develop educational plans that fully reflect students' strengths, needs, and cultural contexts.

Current supports within school systems primarily focus on providing interpretation during meetings or translating selected documents. While these practices are essential components of equitable service delivery, they often fail to provide families with ongoing access to information outside of school meetings. Families frequently leave meetings with unanswered questions or receive information only at critical decision-making points, limiting opportunities

to build knowledge and confidence over time (Aceves, 2014). Furthermore, traditional parent trainings are often delivered in person, creating additional barriers related to transportation, childcare, work schedules, and scheduling flexibility.

Technology offers an opportunity to expand access to culturally responsive educational resources while reducing many of these barriers. Podcasts provide flexible, asynchronous learning opportunities that allow families to access information in their preferred language regardless of time or location. Unlike traditional workshops, podcast episodes can be revisited multiple times as families encounter different stages of the special education process. This accessibility creates opportunities for continuous learning and empowers families to engage more confidently in educational decision-making.

This paper presents a Spanish-language podcast series designed to increase special education knowledge among Spanish-speaking Latine families in Colorado. Drawing upon the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Intersectionality, Power Analysis, and Anti-racism (DEIPAR) framework (Dyer & Gushwa, 2023), Critical Race Theory, and Disability Critical Race Theory, the podcast seeks to reduce linguistic and informational barriers while strengthening family advocacy and participation. By providing accessible, culturally responsive information regarding IDEA, procedural safeguards, special education terminology, and community resources, the podcast serves as an innovative approach to increasing equitable access to information beyond traditional school-based practices. Rather than replacing existing family supports, the podcast complements current services by extending educational opportunities outside formal meetings and promoting stronger partnerships between schools and the Latine communities they serve.

While schools have made important progress in providing language access through interpreters and translated documents, language access enables communication, but knowledge access enables equitable participation. The proposed podcast addresses this gap by providing ongoing, culturally responsive education that empowers Spanish-speaking Latine families to participate as informed partners throughout the special education process.

Literature Review and Problem Statement

Special education is intended to provide equitable educational opportunities for students with disabilities by ensuring access to individualized supports and services. Although federal legislation, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), guarantees families the right to participate in educational decision-making, equitable participation remains difficult for many culturally and linguistically diverse families. Research consistently demonstrates that Spanish-speaking Latine families experience systemic barriers that limit meaningful participation in the special education process, resulting in disparities in access, advocacy, and educational outcomes (Alba et al., 2022; Burke et al., 2020).

Language Barriers and Family Participation

One of the most consistent findings throughout the literature is the impact of language barriers on family participation in special education. Spanish-speaking Latine families report difficulty communicating with educators, understanding special education terminology, and navigating the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process (Alba et al., 2022). These barriers often begin during referral and evaluation and continue throughout eligibility determination, annual reviews, and transition planning.

Although IDEA requires schools to provide interpretation and translation services when needed, access to language supports remains inconsistent. Alba et al. (2022) found that Spanish-speaking parents were significantly less likely than English-speaking families to receive educational information and IEP documents in their preferred language. Families also described difficulties asking questions during meetings because they lacked confidence in understanding educational terminology or feared misunderstanding important information.

Communication challenges extend beyond translation. Effective collaboration requires families to understand educational procedures, disability categories, available services, and their legal rights as members of the IEP team. Simply translating documents does not necessarily increase understanding or confidence. Research suggests that families require ongoing opportunities to learn about special education outside of formal meetings to become effective advocates for their children (Aceves, 2014).

Liu et al. (2018) further demonstrated that communication improves when educators themselves are able to communicate in Spanish rather than relying exclusively on interpreters. Families reported feeling more comfortable sharing concerns and participating in discussions when they experienced direct communication with educators. Although bilingual professionals remain limited within many school districts, these findings highlight the importance of culturally responsive communication beyond basic interpretation services.

Power, Advocacy, and Family Empowerment

The literature consistently identifies unequal power relationships between schools and families as another significant barrier to equitable participation. Although IDEA positions parents as equal members of the educational team, many Latine families report feeling intimidated during meetings and perceive educators as the primary decision-makers (Angell & Solomon, 2017).

Parents frequently describe entering meetings without understanding the process, educational terminology, or available options. This lack of information contributes to feelings of disempowerment and decreases confidence in asking questions or disagreeing with school recommendations. Burke et al. (2020) found that Spanish-speaking families reported significantly lower levels of special education knowledge and family empowerment than English-speaking families. Families who understood their rights and the special education process demonstrated greater confidence advocating for appropriate services and participating in educational planning.

Research also highlights that fear influences advocacy. Some families expressed concerns about challenging school personnel because they worried their child might receive fewer services or experience negative treatment (Mortier et al., 2021). Others reported hearing stories from members of their communities regarding discrimination or unsuccessful attempts to advocate for services, creating additional reluctance to participate fully in educational decision-making (Angell & Solomon, 2017).

These experiences illustrate that equitable participation requires more than legal protections. Families must also possess the knowledge, confidence, and resources necessary to exercise those rights effectively. Increasing family knowledge represents one strategy for reducing existing power imbalances while strengthening collaborative partnerships between schools and families.

Systemic Inequities in Special Education

The barriers experienced by Latine families cannot be understood independently of the broader historical and structural inequities that continue to shape special education. Historically, educational systems have reflected systemic racism and ableism that have contributed to unequal access to educational opportunities for students with disabilities and students from historically marginalized communities (Blanchard et al., 2021).

Research has documented longstanding disparities in special education identification, placement, and disciplinary practices. Students of color continue to experience disproportionality in referrals, disability classifications, suspensions, and expulsions (Colorado Department of Education, 2017). Although disproportionality varies across disability categories and geographic regions, these disparities suggest that systemic factors influence educational outcomes beyond individual student characteristics.

Davila (2015) argues that understanding these disparities requires examining educational systems through Critical Race Theory and Disability Critical Race Theory. Rather than viewing educational inequities as isolated incidents, these frameworks recognize that institutional policies and practices often reproduce historical patterns of exclusion. Language differences, cultural assumptions, and implicit bias may all contribute to unequal educational opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Curran and Hulse (2021) similarly noted that emergent bilingual students are both overrepresented and underrepresented within special education depending upon disability category. Distinguishing between language acquisition and disability remains a significant challenge for educators, particularly when culturally responsive assessment practices are inconsistent. These findings emphasize the importance of improving communication and family participation throughout evaluation and eligibility determination.

Current Interventions and Remaining Gaps

Several interventions have demonstrated promise in increasing family knowledge and participation. Among the strongest evidence is parent education delivered in families' preferred language. Aceves (2014) developed Spanish-language workshops designed to educate families regarding special education procedures, parental rights, and available community resources. Families who participated reported increased understanding of the IEP process and greater confidence advocating for their children.

Similarly, Luelmo et al. (2021) found that targeted advocacy training improved parents' knowledge of special education while increasing family empowerment. These findings suggest that increasing access to information can strengthen family participation and improve collaboration between schools and families.

Mortier et al. (2021) examined the role of cultural brokers who served as advocates connecting Latine families with educational systems. Families reported that cultural brokers helped explain educational terminology, navigate school procedures, and facilitate communication with educators. These supports reduced feelings of isolation while strengthening trust between families and schools.

Despite these promising interventions, significant gaps remain. Many existing programs rely upon in-person workshops or individual advocacy services that may be difficult for families to access because of work schedules, transportation, childcare responsibilities, or limited availability. Additionally, most interventions occur only after students have entered the special education system rather than providing proactive educational resources before families encounter critical educational decisions.

Research also demonstrates that families often receive information only during formal school meetings. While interpreters facilitate communication during these meetings, families continue to report limited opportunities to build knowledge outside of scheduled educational events. Consequently, many parents enter IEP meetings without sufficient understanding of their rights, educational terminology, or available services.

Another gap identified throughout the literature is the limited availability of culturally responsive educational resources that families can access independently. Although school districts increasingly translate documents, translation alone does not provide the comprehensive education necessary to promote advocacy and long-term family engagement. Accessible resources that families can revisit throughout their child's educational journey remain limited.

Rationale for the Current Project

The existing literature demonstrates that increasing family knowledge improves advocacy, strengthens collaboration, and promotes more equitable participation in special education (Aceves, 2014; Burke et al., 2020). However, few interventions have leveraged technology to provide ongoing, culturally responsive education that families can access at their convenience.

The proposed Spanish-language podcast addresses this gap by providing free, on-demand educational content focused on special education, procedural safeguards, family rights, advocacy strategies, and community resources. Unlike traditional workshops, podcast episodes can be accessed repeatedly from home, during travel, or at any time that is convenient for families. This flexibility reduces barriers related to transportation, scheduling, and childcare while increasing opportunities for continuous learning.

Grounded in the lived experiences described throughout the literature, the proposed podcast addresses a critical gap in current practice. Although schools have made important progress in providing language access through interpreters and translated documents, language access enables communication, but knowledge access enables equitable participation. Families need ongoing, culturally responsive educational resources that extend beyond formal school meetings and support advocacy throughout their child's educational journey. The podcast moves beyond simply translating information by providing culturally responsive education designed specifically for Spanish-speaking Latine families. Rather than positioning families as passive recipients of services, the podcast recognizes them as knowledgeable partners whose participation is essential to student success. By increasing access to information, strengthening family knowledge, and reducing systemic barriers, this project seeks to strengthen family advocacy, improve school-family partnerships, and advance educational equity within special education.

Theoretical Framework

This project is grounded in the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Intersectionality, Power Analysis, and Anti-racism (DEIPAR) framework developed by Dyer and Gushwa (2023). DEIPAR provides an equity-centered lens for examining the systemic barriers that influence educational access and participation while recognizing that students and families possess multiple intersecting identities that shape their experiences. For Spanish-speaking Latine families navigating special education, these identities include language, race, ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic status, immigration status, and culture. Understanding these intersecting identities is essential for addressing inequities that extend beyond individual circumstances and are embedded within educational systems.

The diversity component of DEIPAR acknowledges that families bring unique cultural experiences, strengths, and perspectives to the educational process (Dyer & Gushwa, 2023). School districts increasingly serve culturally and linguistically diverse populations, yet educational systems often provide information through practices designed primarily for English-speaking families. This project recognizes diversity by providing educational content in Spanish while acknowledging the lived experiences of Latine families navigating special education. Rather than expecting families to adapt to existing systems, the intervention seeks to increase access through culturally responsive communication.

Equity requires more than equal access to services; it requires providing families with the resources necessary to participate meaningfully in educational decision-making (Dyer & Gushwa, 2023). Although IDEA guarantees procedural rights and schools commonly provide interpreters during meetings, research demonstrates that Spanish-speaking Latine families continue to experience inequitable access to information, report lower levels of special education knowledge, and participate less actively during Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings (Alba et al., 2022; Burke et al., 2020). The proposed podcast addresses this inequity by providing ongoing educational resources that families can access outside of formal meetings, increasing opportunities to build knowledge before participating in educational decisions.

The DEIPAR framework also emphasizes inclusion by promoting authentic participation rather than symbolic involvement. Families become meaningful partners when they possess the knowledge and confidence necessary to advocate for their children. Providing accessible educational resources in families' preferred language supports collaboration while recognizing that equitable participation requires more than attendance at meetings. It requires understanding the special education process, available services, and procedural safeguards.

Power analysis is another essential component of DEIPAR. Research consistently demonstrates that Spanish-speaking Latine families often perceive educators as the experts while parents feel uncertain about questioning recommendations or advocating for services because of language barriers and unfamiliarity with educational systems (Angell & Solomon, 2017; Mortier et al., 2021). Increasing access to knowledge helps redistribute power by positioning families as informed partners within the IEP process. Rather than relying solely on educators to explain procedures during meetings, families can build understanding independently and participate more confidently in educational decision-making.

This project is further informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT) and its extensions, Latina/o Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) and Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit) (Davila, 2015).

These frameworks emphasize that educational inequities are not the result of individual family characteristics but are produced through institutional policies, historical practices, and systemic oppression. LatCrit specifically recognizes how language, immigration, and culture intersect with race to influence the experiences of Latine communities, while DisCrit examines the intersection of race and disability in educational systems. Together, these perspectives encourage educators to examine systemic barriers rather than viewing language differences as deficits within families.

Finally, this project draws upon Adaptive Leadership (Korengel, 2008), which emphasizes innovation, collaboration, and systems change to address persistent challenges. Adaptive leadership encourages educational leaders to move beyond traditional approaches by developing solutions that align with organizational values and community needs. The proposed podcast reflects this approach by leveraging technology to provide accessible, culturally responsive education beyond school walls. Rather than replacing existing services, the intervention complements current practices by expanding opportunities for learning, strengthening family-school partnerships, and advancing educational equity. Collectively, DEIPAR, Critical Race Theory, and Adaptive Leadership provide the theoretical foundation for an intervention that seeks to reduce systemic barriers while empowering Spanish-speaking Latine families to become informed and active participants throughout the special education process.

Equity-Focused Podcast Intervention

The literature consistently demonstrates that increasing family knowledge strengthens advocacy, improves family-school partnerships, and promotes more equitable participation throughout the special education process (Aceves, 2014; Burke et al., 2020). Although school districts have made important progress in improving language access through interpreters and translated documents, language access enables communication, but knowledge access enables equitable participation. The proposed Spanish-language podcast was developed to address this gap by providing accessible, culturally responsive education specifically designed for Spanish-speaking Latine families in Colorado.

The intervention consists of a ten-episode Spanish-language podcast series that provides families with practical information about special education while centering the lived experiences of Latine families. Each approximately 45-minute episode focuses on a different topic relevant to navigating the special education process and is designed to be accessible to families regardless of their work schedules, transportation, childcare responsibilities, or geographic location. Unlike traditional parent workshops that require attendance at a specific time and place, podcast episodes are available on demand, allowing families to engage with information whenever it is most convenient and revisit content throughout their child's educational journey.

The series begins by introducing the history and purpose of special education, including the development of IDEA and the rights afforded to students with disabilities and their families. Understanding the historical context of special education provides families with a foundation for recognizing how educational policies have evolved and why advocacy remains necessary. Additional episodes focus on significant disproportionality within special education, highlighting the persistent racial, ethnic, and linguistic disparities that continue to affect culturally and linguistically diverse students in Colorado and across the United States.

Several episodes are dedicated to helping families understand the special education process from referral through eligibility, evaluation, IEP development, annual reviews, and transition planning. Educational terminology is explained using accessible language while emphasizing procedural safeguards and parental rights under IDEA. Families are provided with practical strategies for preparing for meetings, reviewing evaluation reports, asking questions, requesting additional assessments, and collaborating effectively with school teams. Community resources available within Colorado are also highlighted to increase families' awareness of advocacy organizations, legal resources, and family support services.

A distinguishing feature of the podcast is its emphasis on storytelling and community expertise. Research demonstrates that families often feel isolated while navigating special education and benefit from hearing the experiences of others who have encountered similar challenges (Mortier et al., 2021). The podcast incorporates interviews with bilingual professionals, school social workers, special educators, advocates, and Latine parents who share their experiences navigating educational systems. These conversations provide practical guidance while validating families' lived experiences and reinforcing that they are not alone in encountering barriers.

Unlike interventions that focus solely on translating existing materials, the podcast was designed to build family knowledge. Educational content is intentionally organized to increase confidence and promote meaningful participation throughout the special education process. Families are encouraged to view themselves as equal members of the IEP team whose cultural knowledge and understanding of their child are essential to educational decision-making. By increasing knowledge before formal meetings occur, families are better positioned to ask questions, advocate for services, and collaborate with educators from a position of confidence rather than uncertainty.

The intervention also aligns with culturally responsive practice by recognizing that learning occurs outside of formal educational settings. Families are able to access podcast episodes from home, while commuting, or at times that fit their daily routines. This flexibility addresses barriers frequently identified throughout the literature, including transportation, work schedules, childcare responsibilities, and limited availability of in-person trainings (Aceves, 2014). Because episodes remain available over time, families can revisit information as their child's educational needs change or as they encounter different stages of the special education process.

The podcast also has important implications for educational professionals and school systems. Increasing family knowledge has the potential to strengthen communication, reduce misunderstandings, and create more collaborative IEP meetings. Families who understand educational terminology, evaluation procedures, and procedural safeguards are more prepared to participate as informed partners rather than passive recipients of information. This shift supports educational teams in developing individualized educational plans that more accurately reflect students' strengths, cultural contexts, and family priorities.

Future evaluation of the podcast should examine its effectiveness in increasing family knowledge, confidence, and advocacy. Outcomes such as changes in parental understanding of IDEA, perceptions of empowerment, participation during IEP meetings, and family-school partnerships could provide valuable evidence regarding the effectiveness of technology-based educational interventions. Additional research may also explore implementation across

different school districts and evaluate whether similar approaches could support families from other culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Ultimately, this project moves beyond translating educational information by creating a culturally responsive resource that promotes knowledge access. While interpreters remain essential for facilitating communication during school meetings, equitable participation requires families to understand the special education process before, during, and after those meetings occur. By combining research, community expertise, and accessible technology, the podcast seeks to reduce systemic barriers, strengthen family advocacy, and advance educational equity for Spanish-speaking Latine families. This intervention demonstrates how educational systems can move beyond compliance with language access requirements toward creating sustainable, equity-focused practices that empower families as informed partners in their children's education.

Discussion

The literature consistently demonstrates that Spanish-speaking Latine families continue to experience significant barriers when navigating the special education process despite legal protections intended to ensure equitable participation. Although IDEA establishes parents as equal members of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, research indicates that language barriers, limited access to information, unfamiliarity with educational terminology, and unequal power dynamics continue to influence family participation (Alba et al., 2022; Burke et al., 2020; Mortier et al., 2021). These findings suggest that compliance with legal requirements alone does not guarantee meaningful family engagement.

One of the most significant findings across the literature is that current practices largely focus on providing language access through interpreters and translated documents. While these services remain essential for equitable communication, they often provide information only during formal meetings and do not address families' ongoing need to understand the special education process outside of those interactions. As a result, many families continue to report uncertainty regarding their rights, available services, and advocacy strategies despite receiving interpretation during meetings (Aceves, 2014; Alba et al., 2022).

The proposed podcast addresses this gap by shifting the focus from language access alone to knowledge access. Rather than simply translating information, the podcast provides ongoing, culturally responsive education that families can access throughout their child's educational journey. This distinction is important because equitable participation requires more than the ability to communicate during meetings; it requires families to understand educational systems, procedural safeguards, evaluation processes, and available resources well before critical educational decisions are made. Providing information through an accessible, on-demand platform allows families to build knowledge over time, increasing confidence and strengthening their ability to participate as informed members of the educational team.

The podcast also reflects a strengths-based perspective by recognizing families as knowledgeable partners rather than passive recipients of services. Throughout the literature, Latine families consistently expressed a desire to participate actively in educational decision-making but reported systemic barriers that limited meaningful engagement (Angell & Solomon, 2017; Luna et al., 2023). By centering lived experiences, community voices, and culturally responsive communication, the intervention validates family expertise while promoting collaborative partnerships between schools and families.

This project also has implications for school social workers, special educators, and educational leaders. School social workers are uniquely positioned to advocate for equitable family engagement and reduce systemic barriers through culturally responsive practice. The podcast represents one example of how educational professionals can leverage technology to extend learning opportunities beyond the school setting while strengthening family-school partnerships. As school districts continue working to reduce disproportionality and improve educational equity, interventions that increase family knowledge may complement existing practices and support more inclusive decision-making.

Although this project presents a promising approach to increasing family engagement, additional research is needed to evaluate its effectiveness. Future studies should examine changes in family knowledge, perceptions of empowerment, advocacy behaviors, and participation during IEP meetings. Evaluating these outcomes will contribute to the growing body of research focused on culturally responsive, technology-based interventions designed to reduce systemic barriers in special education.

Conclusion

Meaningful family participation is fundamental to equitable special education practice; however, Spanish-speaking Latine families continue to experience barriers that limit access to information, advocacy, and educational decision-making. The literature demonstrates that language differences, systemic inequities, and unequal power relationships contribute to disparities in family engagement despite federal protections established through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Although schools have made important progress by providing interpreters and translated materials, equitable participation requires more than language access alone.

This paper proposes a Spanish-language podcast grounded in the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Intersectionality, Power Analysis, and Anti-racism (DEIPAR) framework as an innovative approach to increasing knowledge access for Spanish-speaking Latine families. By providing culturally responsive education about special education, procedural safeguards, family rights, and community resources, the podcast seeks to strengthen advocacy, improve family-school partnerships, and promote more equitable participation throughout the special education process. Rather than replacing existing school-based supports, the podcast complements current practices by providing families with accessible, on-demand educational resources that can be revisited throughout their child's educational journey.

Supporting families with accessible knowledge recognizes parents as essential members of the educational team whose lived experiences, cultural knowledge, and advocacy contribute to student success. Expanding educational resources beyond formal school meetings has the potential to reduce systemic barriers while empowering families to participate as informed and confident partners in educational decision-making. As school districts continue advancing equity-centered practices, interventions that prioritize both language access and knowledge access offer an important opportunity to strengthen collaboration, increase family engagement, and create more inclusive special education systems.

Language access enables communication, but knowledge access enables equitable participation. Ultimately, equitable special education is achieved not only when families can understand the conversation but when they have the knowledge, confidence, and opportunity to shape it.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used generative artificial intelligence (AI) to assist with editing, organization, and language refinement. The AI-assisted technologies were used solely to improve readability and presentation. The author reviewed, edited, and approved all content and accepts full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the manuscript.

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