

Chapter 1

Team-Based Collaborative Practices: Inclusion, EPP, Pre-Service Teachers, and Families

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ABSTRACT

Collaboration is a team-based professional partnership in which structured but shared problem-solving processes are used to reach a common goal. This chapter highlights theoretical frameworks and collaboration models. Barriers to communication are discussed as well as various collaboration models. Project-based collaboration is described as well as ways to be effective within this model. Case-based learning collaboration is also discussed. A final evidence-based model for collaboration in communities of practice that can supplement based on case-based instruction using teacher discussion and participatory learning is presented. Communities of practice have been defined by Kirchner and Laib as environments where individuals who share common interests regarding a problem or subject exchange ideas, develop solutions, and construct knowledge as part of an ongoing social learning process that occurs over a long period of time.

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INTRODUCTION

Collaboration is a team-based professional partnership in which structured but shared problem-solving processes are used to reach a common goal (Friend & Bursuck, 2015). Collaborative efforts amongst general/special teachers, related service providers, and other school personnel must be interactive and are used improve learning outcomes for students with disabilities and is critical to facilitating inclusive practices (Huberman, Navo, & Parrish, 2012). Collaboration has been described within the research literature as a universal characteristic of success within inclusive schools and teachers who utilize collaborative and reflective practices strengthen their self-efficacy and working relationships with other practitioners (Huberman et al., 2010; Hughes & Chin, 2011).

In a study conducted by Gehrke and Cocchiarella (2013), the researchers found that preservice elementary, secondary, and special education teachers reported that university teacher preparation programs provided information about how to identify the processes of effective inclusion, but failed to provide connections to the meaning and function of inclusion. In another study conducted by Wang, Hall, and Rahimi (2015), the researchers surveyed 323 in-service teachers and found that special education teachers implementing inclusive practices have a higher efficacy of implementation in comparison to general education teachers. One potential reason for the discrepancy was related to the increased preparation and training in inclusive education for special educators which differs significantly from general educators. Often, general educators do not have a foundation in special education law or an understanding of what factors contribute to successful inclusion (Wang et al., 2012). This chapter will address topics such as the theoretical support for collaboration, collaboration insights, ineffective communication barriers, collaboration for professional development, collaborative responsibilities, and evidence-based collaboration models.

THEORETICAL SUPPORT OF COLLABORATION: ACTIVITY THEORY

Collaborative structures commonly found in teacher preparation programs are a culmination of courses and clinical/field-based activities that can assist the pre-service teacher in developing their values, belief systems, and practical use applications in the classroom (Weiss, Pellegrino, & Brigham, 2017). Activity Theory is conceptualized as a purposeful and meaningful interaction between people and objects which translates into the education setting as the connection between the students understanding of course content and the ability to apply/implement concepts, collectively (Engeström

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