Collaboration in Special Education

Chapter 4
Objectives

• Describe what collaboration is and why it has become so critical in providing special education services to students with disabilities.

• Identify skills that educators should develop to collaborate effectively.

• Outline collaborative practices on behalf of students with disabilities that are most common in today’s schools, including teams, co-teaching, and consultation.

• Discuss the role of collaboration in working with parents and family members.

• Describe issues related to collaboration in special education.
Understanding Collaboration

- Voluntary
- Based on parity
- Requires a mutual goal
- Involves shared responsibility for key decisions
- Includes shared accountability for outcomes
- Requires sharing resources
- Emergent
Collaboration in the Context of IDEA

- General education teachers participate on most IEP teams
- Increased parent involvement
- Conflict resolution to address disagreements
- Emphasis on LRE
- Consultative special education services
Essential Elements of Collaboration

1. Personal belief system

2. Communication skills and use of strategies
   - Listening
   - Use of nonverbal signals
   - Use of non-evaluative language
   - Use of questions that encourage others to speak
Avoid Communication Errors

- Quick fixes
- Questions that echo your opinions
- Use of jargon
Essential Elements of Collaboration, cont.
3. Interaction Processes Steps

1. Create a climate for problem solving
2. Identify the problem
3. Generate alternatives
4. Assess potential solutions, select one
5. Implement the intervention
6. Evaluate the outcome
7. Continue, modify, or select new
4. Programs and services (like teaming, co-teaching, and consultation)

5. Supportive context (principals)

- Arranging professionals’ schedules to provide planning time
- Serving as a facilitator when collaborators have disagreements
- Explicitly making collaboration a standard for all school personnel
- Arranging for professional development
Understanding Team Concepts

- Two or more interdependent individuals working to achieve a mutual goal
- Each person identifies as a team member
- Members abide by formal and informal rules
- Success is directly related to the work of all team members
- Members value their differences
Factors of Team Effectiveness

1. Quality of outcomes produced by team
2. Clarity of team goals
3. Member’s needs are met
4. Members are accountable
5. Members monitor their own behavior
Special Education Teams

Least Collaborative

Most Collaborative

Transdisciplinary

Interdisciplinary

Multi-disciplinary
Co-Teaching

- One teach, one observe
- Parallel teaching
- Station teaching
- Alternative teaching
- Teaming
- One teach, one assist
Consultation

- Indirect service to students
- Establish a positive relationship
- Identify a problem and use problem solving techniques
- Decide if need to continue, modify, or end (problem solved)
Barriers to Parental Collaboration

- Prior negative school experiences
- Some parents see their role as listeners only
- Logistical problems
- Language barriers and misunderstanding
- Some schools don’t make parents feel welcome
- Some believe some parents are not good parents
- Some educators are intimidated
- School to home communications too negative
- Professionals and parents may develop and act upon stereotypes instead of on objective information
Factors Affecting Parental Involvement

- Socioeconomic status
- Race/ethnicity and primary language
- Student grade level
- Nature and severity of the disability
Phases of Parental Reaction to Child’s Disability

- **Reaction phase**: concern, confusion, and/or helplessness; development of understanding
- **Transition phase**: growing in acceptance, accommodations, advocacy
- **Integration phase**: self-education, range of supports, relationships with service providers, assimilation of their changed lives
Building Partnerships with Parents

- Understand families’ perspectives
- Understand that collaboration is not always the goal (encourage participation)
- Address cultural differences
- Avoid treating all members of a cultural group as though they are alike
- Develop cultural sensitivity
- Ask parents for their unique perspectives
- Listen to their points of view
Issues Related to Collaboration

- Working with paraeducators
- Time for collaboration
- The effectiveness of collaboration