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SPED 854

Module 1 Philosophy

Collaboration is an essential part of special education. Students are no longer with one teacher for the whole school day and can interact with multiple individuals. Consistent engagement is paramount for all IEP team members. All the key personnel that a special education teacher needs to collaborate with are the general education teacher, paraprofessionals, principals, school psychologists, parents/legal guardians, the student, and additional service providers, such as speech pathologists, social workers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, English language learners' teachers, and any specialists.

Interventions and rewards must be consistent across all school areas, achieved through continuous and open collaboration. To best serve students, teachers need to be honest about their concerns and ideas and not focus on personal issues between staff. Students' needs come first. The special education teacher needs to collaborate with the general education teacher to create interventions or accommodations to best help the students in general education settings. Equally, the special education teacher needs to cooperate with any paraprofessionals that interact with the students to best train them on how to implement student plans. Additionally, suppose the student receives other services, such as speech services. In that case, the special education teacher needs to collaborate with these service providers to schedule pull-out sessions and build towards parallel goals.

Ultimately, the special education teacher must collaborate with parents and the student. Collaborating with parents will help create unifying interventions that can be used at home and

school. Educators must develop a relationship with parents to better understand each student and their respective cultures. Just as a teacher needs a relationship with students to best teach them, a teacher must know a parent to best work with them. The best way to create trust is to bond over what connects you, the student. Discuss how you want what is best for the student and the family to begin to build trust. Implementing plans with students can help motivate them by providing choices in rewards they will achieve to help them better understand their goals and how to reach them. Additionally, implementing plans that can be done at school and at home can help build communication and trust with parents. Find which communication method parents prefer and use this to communicate student progress with them.

Special education cannot be accomplished alone. Together, the IEP team collaborates to create a plan for each student, and the special education teacher implements the agreed-upon procedure. All the IEP team members are the key players in collaboration in special education. For collaboration, the principal is equally essential as they know what materials and programs are available or possible for each student. Additionally, they can help be a bridge for parents in initial students' cases or new special education teachers. Changes to the IEP team can occur over the child's school years. However, having at least one person be consistent throughout helps parents and can help inform new team members of the student's past at school. As a new teacher, having my principal in all my IEP meetings has been beneficial as she had previous relationships with parents and outside service providers that I did not. Furthermore, her confidence in me helped put our students' parents at ease despite my newness.

Barriers to successful collaboration are personal disputes. Predominantly, I have had positive interactions with my parents and fellow staff. However, I have witnessed grade-level collaborations at my school where teachers do not work well together. This created avoidable

debates and arguments and sometimes excluded others from collaboration. Members of a team do not have to be friends; however, they need to be able to put personal feelings aside and cooperate as a group. Respect is the most fundamental ingredient to have in successful collaboration.

Collaboration is beneficial for grade-level teams; however, it is a requirement for special education. When required personnel work together with respect, it best serves students. Without collaboration, inconsistencies and struggles will occur. Collaboration is essential for effective special education.