

**THE INVESTIGATION OF COLLABORATION STRATEGIES BETWEEN
GENERAL EDUCATION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION**

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ABSTRACT

New special education teachers beginning their career field have many job-related responsibilities and activities to adjust to and learn about. The most important success factor of special education teachers' job is collaboration. Collaboration happens constantly when teaching students with disabilities. In particular, collaboration is an important job responsibility of a special education teacher (Rapert, 2018). The purpose of the current survey study was to provide guidance and explore various collaboration strategies and areas new special educators struggle with. The ultimate purpose of this research was to aid in the development of a collaborative handbook, describing the core components collaboration and providing resources to help support new special education teachers in those identified core components.

This study had twenty four potential teacher participants in a Midwestern junior high school. Fourteen teachers voluntarily completed a needs assessment survey. The survey includes twelve questions about collaboration and communication in their school. Fourteen teachers provided their viewpoints of collaboration and communication in their school. Results showed that teachers see the following as core collaboration and communication components for successful collaboration: (1) an equal partnership between special education and general education teachers, (2) adequate preparation time, (3) consistent collaboration, and (4) effective communication strategies. Another interesting finding is that only three out of fourteen teachers indicated they agreed that special education teachers and general education teachers were viewed as equal partners in the classroom. Other findings are about lack of time, the existence of a regular collaboration and communication method. Twelve teachers indicated they had a lack of time in order to collaborate and plan with the special education teachers. Six out of fourteen

teachers reported that regular collaboration happened between both general and special education teachers. Eleven teachers indicated e-mailing is the easiest way to communicate.

Based on the survey responses and receiving wide responses about teacher's viewpoints regarding collaboration and communication in their building, a guide to help new special education teachers successfully collaborate with all teachers would be beneficial. Giving a new teacher the tools to be successful in an already challenging position, can increase their confidence and understanding of what is expected in the building. Outlining the best way to communicate, and collaborate with all teachers in the building including teachers who many not directly work with special education students daily. The handbook guides and walks through how to set up conferences and meetings with staff and parents of the student. Given a guide on who to contact, when to contact, and having a checklist prior to setting up one of the various meetings a special educator conducts can help a new teacher tremendously in feeling confident and understanding the building procedures. With the approval from the junior high schools principal this handbook was created to guide new teachers at the specific junior high school.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Statement of the problem

Anyone starting off in a new career field can feel stressed, overwhelmed, and confused at times. Teaching is a career field where experience cannot be taught in a college classroom, every day is a new learning experience in teaching. Special education has their own unique needs and stressors, that new special educators most likely will not know about. Special educators new into the field need time to integrate themselves into their new position, and the start of their career. Teachers who are informed about proper supportive resources that help each of their individual needs, help make them more effective in their positions (Rapert, 2018). There are many responsibilities new teachers are unaware of, collaboration is huge in special education (Bonati, 2018). Focusing on the various aspects of collaboration, and investigating ways to help aid new teachers can help reduce the rate of them leaving, along with reducing their stress levels (Jones, Younges, & Frank, 2013).

Significance of the study

This project is significant in investigating what areas of collaboration special educators need more guidance in. Special education teachers are working closely with general education teachers for numerous reasons. They work together to discuss many student characteristics, some including; behavior, academic level, modifications, and accommodations. To help new teachers understand the various aspects of collaboration and the importance it entails, this study provides research and data to create a handbook. Teachers who currently work with special education students, completed a survey asking questions about their collaboration regarding students. Once

the data was collected from the teachers at the participating middle school, and peer-review scholarly articles are referenced, the handbook aiding new teachers in effective collaboration was be developed.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore key collaboration resources and areas of struggle for new special education teachers. This research ultimately investigated the core areas special educators struggle within collaboration, and providing resources to help ease the stress in those areas was used to aid in the development of a collaborative handbook. The purpose for this handbook indicates the various areas collaboration will take place in special education, and what communication strategies teachers can use for effective collaboration.

Research Approach

This research approach used a needs assessment approach. The researcher was granted permission from the Purdue Institutional Review Board (Appendix D) to conduct this research. The research for this project included an anonymous survey given to current general education teachers and special education teachers at the participating junior high school. The survey included questions based on their thoughts and perceptions of how effective and what is most important for collaboration. Including collaboration questions about special education students, and how to effectively modify or apply their accommodations in the general education classroom. Permission to conduct this research at the participating middle school in the Midwest was approved by the junior high school's principal. Surveying this building where the population is 10% special education students, 52% English as a second language, and 26% English language

learner students, helped to give a practical perspective of the special education program, and what is being utilized well. Teachers in this building are constantly modifying, and adapting content material to this school's unique demographics.

Research Questions

1. What are important communication strategies new special education teachers can use for collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers?
2. What components of collaboration are beneficial to special education and general education teachers?

Literature Review

Roles and Responsibilities of Special Educators

Various staff members ask special educators many times daily, about their special education students. Communication and collaboration are a huge part of special education. Constant communication between general education teachers, administration, parents, and outside resources happen daily (Bonati, 2018). General education and special education teachers' work together to develop lesson plans, modifications, accommodations, and discuss the student's progress in their class. Depending on the students ability level assignments may have a reduced amount of work, answer choices, or the reading level may be set to a different lexile (Collins, Sweigart, Landrum, & Cook, 2017).

Not only do special educators have to focus on academics with special education students, but some require behavior and social skills. Trying to teach students appropriate behaviors, and coping strategies is another task. Specials educators, like general educators, do

not just teach students how to read, write, and develop mathematical skills, they model and teach students how to handle life (Zolkoski, 2019).

Communication

Communication between general education and special education teachers is important. Communication is a two-way street, both teachers or individuals who are involved in the collaborative process, need to be available. Establishing a plan to have continuous communication that can include weekly email updates, phone calls, or face to face meetings, helps ensure everyone who is involved is open and committed to having a strong relationship (Welmer, 2019). Individuals involved in the collaboration process have a sense of freedom in knowing the lines of communication are open, and feel less of a burden.

Setting up some structure for communication is a way to help strengthen to ensure effective communication is taking place. Schedules are busy, and it is hard for two or more people to come together daily or weekly without any interruptions. Setting up a Google Form, or having a set template of topics to cover, helps ensure the conversation will consistently cover the necessary topics. Setting up a communication strategy allows for individuals to have consistency without needing to meet face to face, helps create an open and connected relationship to discuss the areas they need to collaborate in (Welmer, 2019).

Various Types of Collaboration

Individual Education Plans

Teachers who have students with a behavior plan, ask questions more frequently if the behaviors are occurring and causing classroom disruption. The teacher of record is responsible for making sure every general education teacher is aware of the student's behavior plan, and all

the strategies that need to take place (Oakes, Schellman, Lane, Common, Powers, Diebold, & Gaskill, 2018). It is important for teachers of record to know and be familiar with their student's behavior plans, if the student is approaching the allotted 10-day suspension, and he/she has a manifestation determination conference, the Individual Education Plan (IEP) has to be followed. If the IEP is not followed the Case Conference Committee (CCC) will determine if the behavior was a result of the school failing to implement the student's IEP. If the positive behavior supports that are in place for the student are not being followed, they cannot be expelled or suspended any longer (Tudisco, 2019).

Lesson Planning

Collaboration is imperative between general education teachers and special education teachers. Collaboration involves two people who have a similar end goal in mind for the learners. When working with students who have disabilities, collaboration is more than discussing general lesson plans and offering helpful advice, it is two or more people sitting down creating lesson plans and activities for students of all levels to be able to adapt and follow along (Da Fonte, & Barton-Arwood, 2017).

Collaborative planning between special education teachers and general education teachers, can help enhance the learning of students. Students with disabilities or without disabilities, can benefit with improved learning outcomes. Teachers working together leads to improved academic achievement by students (Lingo, Barton-Arwood, & Jolivette, 2011). When general educators and special educators work together to develop lesson plans, instructional strategies, and assessments help create a more diverse learning environment for students. Students who need things modified or explained differently than their peers, can be added into

the lesson for all students who may struggle understanding a concept (Bonati, 2018). New special educators are likely to rely heavily on their colleagues for instructional material (Jones, et al., 2013).

Methodology

Participants and Setting

The participants in this research include special educators and general educators located at the participating middle school located in the Midwest. There are 24 teachers in this building and all of them have special education students at some time during their day. The principal at the participating junior high school, gave the co-investigator an approval letter to conduct research in the building. The approval letter is attached (Appendix A).

Data Collection

The co-investigator sent the recruitment email and anonymous survey to the participating middle school's principal to be send out to the staff members. Teachers received a recruitment letter from the principal at the participating middle school through their school email. Following the recruitment letter, they received an anonymous electronic survey, the participating middle school's principal sent out a survey and gave one week for a response. The principal at the participating middle school approved the attached recruitment letter (Appendix B) and attached survey (Appendix C).

Data Analysis

Once the completed surveys were submitted back, the co-investigator analyzed the short answer questions and begin to categorize any similarities. Each person was be labeled with a number and letter to keep questions and answers organized.

Timeline

Emails asking those to participate, and explaining the purpose went out a week before the surveys. The surveys went out the week after a holiday break, and submitted back before another holiday break. The participants had at least two full weeks to respond. Data analysis, then took place in order to gather results.

Outline for Development of the Special Project

For the Special Project, the co-investigator created a handbook for new or those considering becoming special education teachers. This handbook will highlight what a special educators job entails, effective ways to collaborate, and various collaboration settings. This project will take all of January to compile resources. Starting with a description of what a special education teacher does in a “normal” day, then moving into the various aspects and challenges in collaboration

Definition of Terms

Co-Teaching- Co-teaching takes place when a general education teacher and special education teacher are teaching in a general education class with students who have disabilities (Friend, et al., 2010).

Collaboration- Working with one or more people with a common goal in mind (Collaboration, 2019).

General Education- Classes provided by the education system that is available to all students, including electives and extra-curricular activities (Beard, 2009).

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)- An educational plan that is written for students who have a disability, it is developed by a team of people to help the student be more successful in the academic setting and required by law (Beard, 2009).

Parent Rights- The “Notice of Procedural Safeguards and Parent Rights in Special Education” gives parents their rights and roles in the student’s special education process (Beard, 2009)

Special Education- Students with a disability receive services to meet their individual needs. Students may receive services in academics, emotional support, at school, at home, or any other placement setting they may be in (Beard, 2009).

Teacher of Record- The special education teacher who is in charge of monitoring a student’s IEP and who act as a support to the teacher of service; the teacher of record may also be the student’s special education classroom teacher (Beard, 2009).

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the strategies special education teachers use to collaborate with general education teachers. Special education teachers play a significant role in education. At first thought, many people may speculate special educators are the teachers who work with students who have moderate to severe disabilities. While in reality, special education students do not all have noticeable disabilities. Special educators help students with the mildest and more severe disabilities (Andrews & Brown, 2015). Some students may have a learning disability that causes them to struggle in certain content areas more than others, while others have a disability making them unable to communicate to those around them. Special education teachers may all have one category, but no two jobs are alike. Even teachers who teach the same disability levels, within their rooms may appear to be similar, but the daily set up and events widely differ.

This literature review provides various information regarding the roles and responsibilities a special educator has. Along with communication strategies, various types of collaboration, co-teaching in special education, and the strategies that follow along with it, along with the benefits and qualification of teachers in special education. The literature review provides supportive information that help created a handbook for new special education teachers, with the focus in collaboration.

The research questions that are being addressed in this literature review include, what are important communication strategies new special education teachers can use for collaboration

between special education teachers and general education teachers? What components of collaboration are beneficial to special education and general education teachers?

Roles and Responsibilities of a Special Education Teacher

Special educators have many roles and responsibilities. They teach students with and without disabilities multiple content areas in a day. Typically, a special education teacher will co-teach in a classroom, have classes of their own they teach, and provide resource time for students to do homework, study, and take a test.

Special educators are responsible for collaborating with the general education teacher to know what content area is being discussed in class, and how it can relate to making progress towards the students IEP goals (Zaval, & Cornwell, 2017). Special education teachers are responsible for making sure the student is ready and has the skills needed to be successful in the general education classroom. Not all students in special education or even general education students will pass and master every concept and all content being learned, but the special education teacher can show progress, and implement the students individualized education plan to be as successful as possible (Bonati, 2018).

Special educators have a long list of responsibilities, creating lesson plans, helping students reach their academic or behavior goals, co-teaching, collaborating with teachers, staff, students, parents, and outside agencies is a short list of a special educator's responsibilities. Managing so many tasks can be challenging, special educators have to create schedules for their students, manage para-professionals, creating and finding curriculum support, the list continues, but these are the main issues new teachers have been found to struggle with (Gee, & Gonsier-Gerdin, 2018).

Importance of Communication

Communication is a huge part of teaching, communicating to students, staff members, teachers, parents, administration, and outside agencies happen daily. Social norms vary depending on the setting, participants, and agenda. Social norms in general are defined by social psychologist as expectations shared by a group of people about what is the expected behavior within the context of the setting (Zaval, & Cornwell, 2017).

Educators are consistently enforcing social norms to students. Making teachers a huge influence on the next generation for appropriate behavior in society (Zaval, & Cornwell, 2017). Educators have a responsibility to teach and model appropriate behavior for students, providing structure and creating self-discipline helps students fit into the social norms in a work place after their educational career.

When communicating with others teachers and students both have to understand one another and their personal values. Teachers need to understand each other's role and purpose in the collaborative process, and maintain respect for one another while attempting to reach the desired outcome (Bonati, 2018).

Effective communication can take place relatively easy if all participants understand their role and purpose in the process. Whoever is deemed as the leader of the group can use an agenda to help create clarity for the other participants. Giving others the information, they need to guide their participation in the collaborative process can lead to effective communication throughout the collaborative process (Bonati, 2018).

Various Types of Collaboration

Special education has been primarily a collaborative specialty for decades (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010). There is not one person who creates the Individualized Education Plan for the student, the IEP is created from a whole team of people. Special education teachers work with the students, parents, administration, teachers, para-professionals, guidance counselors, speech therapist, occupational therapist, school psychologist, and outside agencies to support the student's individual needs. Collaboration is not an option for a special educator.

Collaboration for Individualized Education Plan's

A case conference committee decides a student's individualized education plan. The special education teacher, or teacher of record does not have the power to create the students IEP on their own. Multiple people are involved in creating a plan to make sure the student is set up for the most educational success while in school, and when they graduate high school.

Students with an IEP have goals and objectives the CCC team reviews every year. Many of the goals and services being provided to students with disabilities benefits the general education learners. Special education teachers do not only help and assist students with disabilities, but they help all students. The strategies and focus a student with a disability has is grade level standards. Therefore, general education students are working on the same standards, having this makes it easier to keep students with disabilities in the general education setting (Friend, et al., 2010).

General Education Teacher Involvement in the IEP Process

General education teachers play a meaningful role in the development in a students' IEP. There are five top categories that prevent many general education teachers from wanting to be involved in the IEP process; team connection, time, preparation, training, and IEP relevance. General education teachers do not always feel connected to the IEP team and sometimes are never invited. Other general education teachers feel unimportant in the meeting, and only attending to meet legal requirements (Menlove, 2001).

Many general education teachers feel they do not have enough time to make it to meetings, or attend conferences for the student. Most teachers have classes during the time of conferences, and do not have anyone to cover. Along, with the timing not working in their schedule, sometimes they do not know the student well enough, especially if the student is a move-in or the class just began (Menlove, 2001).

Having the proper preparation and training to be involved in a special education conference is important, some general education teachers have very little knowledge or training in special education. General education teachers need to have more training, and more exposure to special education in order to feel confident, and understand the importance in creating the students' individual education plan (Menlove, 2001). Special education teachers can help their general education co-workers by providing a template of information they need to bring or be ready to share in the meeting. Providing the general education teacher with an agenda prior to the IEP meeting can increase their confidence and preparedness (Menlove, 2001).

Parent Involvement in the IEP Process

Collaborating with parents is an important part in creating the student's individualized education plan. When scheduling a case conference meeting, talking to the parents directly and offering their input of a set time and day for the meeting that works for everyone can give them the sense of involvement. Inviting parents to bring their child's strengths, weaknesses, and think about their concerns prior to the meeting can help parents feel more prepared and have more input during the case conference itself. If the special education teacher knows there will sensitive topics being brought up in the meeting, giving the parents a heads up and briefly explain what the conference purpose is can help parents not believe the services are predetermined before the meeting. Consulting with parents first before the meeting is one of the most important steps in the process of preparing for a case conference (Weishaar, 2010).

Co-Teaching Between General Education and Special Education Teachers

Co-teaching takes place when a general education teacher and special education teacher are teaching in a general education class with students who have disabilities (Friend, et al., 2010). Co-teaching combines a special education teacher and general education teacher into the same classroom. Both teachers are able to take their strengths and work with students who have higher needs (Fenty, McDuffie-Landrum, Fisher, 2012). The diversity in the classroom based on the students' needs allows both teachers to excel. A general education teacher knows all of the content, and studied specifically how to teach that specific subject. A special education teacher, has general knowledge of all topics, but focus on how to adapt, break down, and accommodate content for students who have disabilities (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007).

Inclusion has rapidly grown since the 1980s when students with disabilities were beginning to be accepted in an inclusive school setting. The thought of students with disabilities could receive services while in the general education classroom emerged and ultimately created the movement for co-teaching. Co-teaching has emerged and grown rapidly since federal laws and regulations changed since students with disabilities need to have access to the same curriculum as general education students, and be taught in their least restrictive environment. While having access to the same curriculum, they must receive individualized instruction they are entitled to through the Individuals with Disabilities Act (Friend, et al., 2010).

Lesson Planning

Collaborative planning between special education teachers and general education teachers, will help enhance the learning of students. Students with disabilities or without disabilities, can benefit with improved learning outcomes. Teachers working together leads to improved academic achievement by students (Lingo, Barton-Arwood, Jolivette, 2011). When general educators and special educators work together to develop lesson plans, instructional strategies, and assessment helps create a more diverse learning environment for students. Students who need things modified or explained differently than their peers, can be added into the lesson for all students who may struggle understanding a concept (Bonati, 2018).

In a study conducted by Fenty and McDuffie-Landrum, they discovered special education and general education teachers who planned together equally shared the classroom instruction. Combining the responsibilities and having an equal partnership between special educators and general educators, helps brings the strategies used in the special education setting to the general

education setting. This allows for students to receive meaningful instruction, with specialized strategy instruction (Fenty, McDuffie-Landrum, Fisher, 2012).

There are multiple strategies for co-teaching in the classroom. Based on six various classroom layouts given by Friend and Bursuck, the general education teacher and special education teacher can do any of the following: one teaches and one observes, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, teaming, and one teach and one assist (Friend, Bursuk, 2019). Each strategy is used based on what the lesson plan is objecting to accomplish (Friend, et al., 2010).

Co-Teaching Strategies

One teacher teaching and the other observing, is when one teacher either general education or special education teacher is leading a large group instruction. The teacher who is not leading the instruction is gathering data on the students. One person is teaching and the other observing can help teachers reflect, and give each other constructive criticism to improve their teaching skills (Friend, et al., 2010).

Station teaching happens when both teachers are giving different instruction to different groups of students. Students are divided up into three different groups, each group rotates from station to station. One teacher is teaching one concept, the students then go to the next station and learn or reinforce another concept, and the third station is where students will work independently. Depending on the class time, will depend how long each group will stay per station. Some stations can be more rigorous than others can, but that is up to the co-teachers to plan (Friend, et al., 2010).

Parallel teaching happens when both teachers take half of the students and teach them the same material. All students are receiving the same content, but it is presented in a small group setting. Students may be divided up based on their skill level, and ways the presentation of the content should be conducted (Friend et al., 2010).

Alternative teaching happens when a small group of students need content the majority of students do not need. This happens if students need remediation time, enrichment activities, assessments need to be taken, or any other purpose where the whole group would not greatly benefit from the instruction or time spent doing. Typically, one teacher is teaching the larger group different content, while the other teacher is working with the smaller group.

Teaming is a form of teaching that both teachers deliver the content to the whole class. Teachers use this strategy by sharing opposing viewpoints, giving multiple ways to complete one problem, and both will help solve problems in directing class engagement (Friend, et al., 2010).

One teacher teaching and one assisting is when one teacher is leading the large group discussion, and the other teacher is assisting student needs. The teacher not leading the group discussion is circulating through the classroom, and addressing student needs without stopping or disrupting the large group instruction. This is effective when teachers have higher behavior issues in the classroom. The other teacher is there to assist and redirect disruptive behaviors without having to stop instruction and distract the other learners (Friend, et al., 2010).

Benefits in Collaboration

Special education teachers typically help the general education teacher behind the scene. They are giving the student with a disability strategy, and working on skills they have a deficit

in. The student with a disability who is receiving these services from a special educator, is able to use the strategies learned and apply it in the general education classroom. When the general education teacher and special education teacher are working together, the student is able to learn some content before the general education classroom begins to cover it. The student who is primed before entering gives the general education teacher more success, because the content being presented is accessible to the special education student. If the two teachers did not work together, the student would struggle much more than he/she does when the content is previously introduced and strategies have been introduced to enhance the comprehension and learning level in the general education classroom (Fenty, McDuffie-Landrum, & Fisher, 2012).

Teacher Preparedness for Collaboration

Programs preparing future teachers, are not graduating enough students to fill the demands our schools need. Therefore, we do not have enough qualified individuals to fill the vacancies for special education. Around one fourth of special educators are on an Emergency Permit working to teach special education students. Some districts are paying their teachers who go back to school, in order to help them become a licensed special education teacher. The question comes, how often do districts look at their special educators and try to make it where they want to stay in the career field (Thornton, Peltier, Medina, 2007).

One issue with special education teachers, is not feeling well prepared and ready to take on the world of special education. Meaning our schools and students are lacking the qualified and consistency they need. Constantly having a new special education teacher or someone who may not make it past their first year or two, causes more chaos for the student and school. With having such a shortage, states have begun making it easier for people to take on the role as a

special educator, and have even tried giving extra incentives to keep people in their position (Rapert, 2018). The question to ask now, is how do we prepare individuals for the role of being a special educator, when every student varies so much? Research is showing our teachers in special education who are less prepared lack confidence and feel overwhelmed by special education. This results in some leaving the profession.

Current Guides for New Special Education Teachers

Currently there are many guides to help new special education teachers. Most of the other resources found have many topics they focus on. The book *The Survival Guide for New Special Education Teachers* written by Catherine Martin and Clara Hauth is very well written and give great guidance for new special education teachers. The book has abroad array of topics, introducing new teachers to the world of education, learning and getting to know the work environment, classroom set up, teaching and testing, collaborating with students and families, and learning to be a special educator. The book is about 120 pages long, it is not too lengthy, but there is a lot of information in the manual. The main issue is it gives an overview of all the responsibilities a special educator needs to know, it does not go into too much detail about the collaboration process that new special educators can struggle with (Martin & Hauth, 2015).

The book *The Exceptional Teacher's Handbook: The First-Year Special Education Teacher's Guide to Success* written by Carla Shelton and Alice Pollingue, is another guide for first year special education teachers. This resource is again an over view of what special education teachers will endure during their first year of teaching. The book is 240 pages long, it is a longer read. This resource gives information about behavior disorders, learning disabilities, new techniques and technology, assessments, transitions, and inclusion. This reference does give

great information, but does not particularly help with collaboration between general education and special education teachers (Shelton & Pollingue, 2005).

After reviewing other resources published to help guide new special education teachers, they all have very useful information that was used to help guide the creation of the collaboration handbook. The current resources found, were too broad and lengthy, and did not specifically go into the importance of collaboration. Although, taking some information found in those guides, helped develop another section for collaboration. It led to the development of adding more information in the guide about case conferences. In order to hold a case conference for a student, collaboration has taken place with teachers, and staff members. It is important for special educators to see how it is an important component to have effective collaboration with the student's parent or guardian as well.

Summary of Literature Review

This literature review heightens the importance of collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers. Given the referenced articles, in order to be an effective special education teacher, collaboration takes place consistently. There are various forms of collaboration, and a variety of people collaboration takes place with. Having strong communication and collaboration strategies and skills, can benefit a special education teacher greatly. Being prepared and applying the learned strategies can benefit the special education teacher, general education teacher, student, and all involved in the student's success.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The importance in conducting the needs assessment survey was to understand the positives and negatives currently taking place regarding collaboration, in the participating middle school. This survey assessed what is working well and what needs to be improved in the participating building. The survey being anonymous, gave the participants a voice in their school building, without feeling judged or nervous to speak out. The participants were able to give their personal opinions and suggestions in the survey. The data is authentic, and made creating the handbook for new special education teachers in the building, relatable to the needs of the participating school. The development of the handbook can help guide new special education teachers in the participating building to become more acclimated, and feel more successful in their first year.

Participants

The participants in this research include special educators and general educators located at a junior high school in the Midwest. The 24 teachers in this building all have special education students or English Learners at some time during their work day. Many of the classes are modified or provide accommodations in them. Teachers adapt their lesson plans for all students to understand and grasp new concepts. Majority of all the language art and math classes, have more than one adult in the room. Some rooms have up to four adults in it at once depending on the student's needs. During one lower level math class for an example, a general education teacher, response to intervention (RTI) teacher, special education teacher, and a school translator

are in the class during one period. The level of support needed is extremely high, and the group of students are highly diverse at the participating junior high school.

Setting

The participating junior high school is located in the Midwest, in a large city with a population of approximately 264,488 people. The location of this school, is in a high poverty area. All students in this school receive free breakfast and free lunch.

The participating junior high school, enrolls approximately 420 students in the 7th and 8th grade. This school currently has 109 English Learner students (26%), 219 students who English was not the first language spoken in the home (52%), and currently have 42 Special Education students (10%). 88% of the participating junior high student demographics is either an English Learner, whose parents do not speak English at home, or receives special education services.

There are approximately 14 students to 1 teacher, the student to teacher ratio at the participating junior high school is lower than the state average of 17 students to 1 teacher. This school's special education population is 10% with two special education teachers in the building to provide services. A typical classroom with special education students with a special education teacher averages about 10 students per class.

In each class that consist of special education students and a special education teacher, is considered direct services for the students. They are no longer in the general education setting, and it is typically a remedial class. Most of the students at this participating junior high school have both a math and language arts class with a special education teacher to review and work on

developing their basic skills. Some students have an additional period with a special education teacher to work on their homework, and have use the time to make up assignments or finish tests.

Research Design

The research used during this study included a qualitative and quantitative approach. The participants all completed an anonymous survey. The survey included 5-point likert scale questions, multiple choice, and short answer. The survey questions all were to do with the topic of collaboration and communication amongst general educators and special educators.

Recruitment and Data Collection Procedure

The researcher was granted permission from the Purdue Institutional Review Board (Appendix D) to conduct this research. The researcher was also granted permission from the participating junior high schools principal (Appendix A). The researcher sent a recruitment letter to the participating junior high schools principal one week prior to sending the survey. The principal of the participating school will forward the recruitment letter, then one week later the principal will send the survey to the school staff. The staff at the participating school received a one-time anonymous electronic survey. The principal at the participating middle school has approved the attached survey (Appendix C). After the staff completed the survey, they submitted it back to the researcher through the link provided. The surveys were sent back to the researcher, and secured on the researchers work computer that she only had access to with a personal username and password.

The survey that was sent to the staff members at the participating middle school asked questions about their collaboration with special education staff members. Those taking the

survey were primarily general education teachers, there is one special education staff member who was asked to participate as well.

Data Source

The survey starts directly with asking participants, in co-teaching, if both teachers are viewed as equal partners in delivering instruction and planning for instruction? Understanding and viewing the participants thoughts on co-teaching helped find the pros and cons in co-teaching. Special education teachers are often co-teaching in the general education setting, to assist the special education students without taking them away from their peers. If teachers do not feel they are viewed equal to their co-teacher, the teachers may not be as effective and delivering the content to the students in an efficient manner. There was a follow up question for the participants to explain their opinion about co-teaching and it being an equal partnership. Having them explain whether they disagree or agree, can justify and gave concrete examples of the pros and cons in co-teaching (Fenty, McDuffie-Landrum, Fisher, 2012).

The next two survey questions asked teachers if they have enough planning time to collaborate, and if it happens regularly. Typically, teachers can be stretched thin and have a long to do list, but knowing if collaboration is a priority, and how to make sure teachers are having time set aside to collaborate with one another is important (Fenty, McDuffie-Landrum, Fisher, 2012). In addition, if teachers do have a set time for planning, this question gave information for those who may not have that time figured out yet. Receiving positive and negative feedback, can help aid the solutions intended to be found in this research (Friend, et al., 2010).

The two questions following planning time, involve communication between teachers. The first question involved if an agenda describing what will take place during the collaborative

meeting is provided (Bonati, 2018), and if it is effective or ineffective, along with options for the easiest way to communicate. Understanding, what the majority of participants feel is most effective for communication, and can help the researcher understand strategies and ways special educators can reach out to their co-workers (Bonati, 2018).

The remaining five questions in the survey asked for suggestions and the participants viewpoints on how effective communication and collaboration is in their building. Having direct input and feedback from the staff in their own building, helped guide the individual needs for the participating school. Having the information from the survey helped aid the research and create the handbook for new special education teachers.

Table 1

Survey Questions

Survey Question	Corresponding Research Question	Response Type	Source
In co-teaching, both teachers are viewed as equal partners in delivering instruction and planning for instruction?	Question 2	5-point likert scale	Fenty, McDuffie-Landrum, Fisher, 2012
Special educators and general educators have appropriate individual planning time?	Question 1	5-point likert scale	Fenty, McDuffie-Landrum, Fisher, 2012
Regular collaboration happens between general education and special education teachers, regarding special education issues?	Question 2	5-point likert scale	Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010
Do special education staff typically have an agenda when going into collaboration meetings?	Question 1	Multiple Choice with Explanation	Bonati, 2018

Table 1 continued

When an agenda is provided how ineffective or effective is it?	Question 1	5-point likert scale	Bonati, 2018
What is the easiest and best way for you to communicate with special education staff?	Question 1	Multiple Choice	Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010
What ways could communication be improved with you and special education staff?	Question 1	Short Answer	Zaval, & Cornwell, 2017
How effective is an IEP at a glance (shortened summary of IEP)?	Question 2	5-point likert scale	Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010
How effective is an in-person meeting regarding special education students?	Question 1	5-point likert scale	Zaval, & Cornwell, 2017
What is your biggest concern with collaborating between special education and general education teachers?	Question 2	Multiple Choice	Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010
Rate the effectiveness of collaboration in this building.	Question 2	5-point likert scale	Lingo, Barton-Arwood, Jolivet, 2011
What are your suggestions for improving collaboration in this building?	Question 1 and 2	Short Answer	Welmer, 2019

Data Analysis

Once the completed surveys are submitted back, the researcher analyzed the short answer questions and begin to categorize any similarities. Each person will be labeled with a number or letter to keep questions and answers organized. The data and information gathered from the

participants, was used to help guide the needs for developing the handbook for new special educators.

Timeline for Special Project

Emails asking those to participate, and explaining the purpose went out a week before the surveys. The surveys went out the week after a holiday break, and were required to be returned before the end of the semester. This gave at least two full weeks for participants to respond. Data analysis, took place in order to gather results to help guide the outline of the special project handbook. After data compilation, justification and substantiation for the need of a handbook regarding collaboration for new special educators occurs.

- Mid-November: Recruitment emails will be sent to the participating junior high schools principal, then she will send the email to staff members.
- End of November: Survey will be sent to the participating junior high schools principal and she will send the survey to the participating staff members.
- Beginning of December: Completed surveys will be sent back to the researcher
- End of December: Researcher will begin to analyze data and organize responses.
- Beginning of January: Taking analyzed data and compare to the literature review, finish draft for abstract.
- Mid-end of January: Create tables of data and visual representation of data collected, update current document to match Purdue template. Work on acknowledgment pages.
- Beginning of February: Summarize the findings from data and research, make comparisons and indicate connections from literature review, send abstract to the Research Symposium.
- End of February: Begin creating conclusion for research and data found, chapter 6, review first three pages of each chapter, and design of the handbook, working on symposium presentation.
- March: Review formatting, editing, and any final changes, symposium presentation.
- End of March: Submit Special Project

- Beginning April: Submit PowerPoint presentation to be reviewed.
- Mid April: Present PowerPoint presentation to faculty and students, make any final revisions and changes.
- End of April: Submit everything for final review and approval to PFW.

Special Project

Creating a handbook based on collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers, can help anyone new into the career field or new into the participating building that completed the survey assessment. The handbook presents the key areas in collaboration, based on the survey assessment and research from scholarly articles. Pinpointing the importance aspects in collaboration can provide strategies for communication and beneficial ways to conduct effective collaboration.

The handbook also indicates a job description for special educators, it allows anyone newer into the career field, or a general education teacher to understand the job complexity in special education. Allowing for special educators and general educators to have an understanding of the similarities, and differences in responsibility they each possess, can give a level of understanding and respect for one another.

In the handbook, giving a description of different forms and settings of collaboration that take place for a special education teacher is crucial. Collaboration is such a large portion of the job, it takes place in many ways. Having reference guides for setting up case conferences, meetings, staffing, and anything else that might be thrown at the special educator's way, can be highly beneficial for a newer teacher. Those are concepts that come with experience, having a how to guide or a reminder sheet, can truly benefit an overwhelmed and cognitively overloaded new teacher.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the components of collaboration between general education and special education teachers. Understanding how special education and general education teachers work together can benefit a new teacher in the building. This study investigated the important communication strategies new special education teachers can use to help them collaborate effectively with general education teachers. Ultimately the research took place in order to complete a handbook to help guide new special education teachers with collaboration and communication with general education teachers.

Research questions

1. What are important communication strategies new special education teachers can use for collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers?
2. What components of collaboration are beneficial to special education and general education teachers?

Demographics

The teachers at the participating junior high school were all asked to participate in the needs assessment survey regarding collaboration and communication between special education and general education teachers. There were a total number of 24 potential participants, and 14 teachers (58%) elected to volunteer in completing the survey. All of the participant's responses were included in the analysis.

Collaboration

Equality and Partnership

Based on a question from the survey regarding collaboration, only three teachers (21.43%) agreed that special education teachers and general education teachers are viewed as equals and share the preparation and workload. Six teachers (42.86%) were neutral in whether they agreed or disagreed, and five teachers (35.71%) did not believe general education and special education teachers share an equal partnership. Two teachers (14.29) indicated in the comments they do not co-teach. More than half the participating teachers did not feel special education teacher share an equal partnership together.

Consistency

Along with half of the participating staff not feeling that general education and special education teachers share the workload equally, five teachers (35.71%) did not agree that collaboration happens regularly regarding special education students. One comment left by a participating teacher indicated they often overlook special education teachers because of the lack of time and ability to collaborate. Another comment written by a respondent who disagreed about regular collaboration was, “A lot of general education teachers do not take the time to reach out to special education teachers other than for IEPs. So much more can be done for special education students if more collaboration was done.”

On the reverse side 6 teachers (42.86%) agreed collaboration takes place regularly regarding issues with special education students. One of the participants responses indicated, it is easy to collaborate with special education staff when they co teach together. While almost half of the

participants indicated they agree regular collaboration happens in this building, there were no additional comments given.

Concerns

Teachers were asked the question “What is your biggest concern with collaborating between special education and general education teachers?” Their answer choices included the following: lack of time, personality conflict, or content knowledge. One teacher (7.14%) indicated personality conflict between two staff members was a large concern. One teacher (7.14%) selected content knowledge as a concern with collaboration. Twelve teachers (85.71%) indicated they felt lack of time was the most prominent barrier between special education and general education collaborate together.

Collaboration Strategies

Agenda

Eleven teachers (78.57%) indicated that the special education staff typically have an agenda present for collaborative meetings. Three teachers (21.43%) did not agree that the special education staff have an agenda available for meetings. When an agenda was provided teachers were asked about the effectiveness it had. Seven teachers (50%) found it very effective, and the other seven teachers (50%) finds a provided agenda somewhat effective. Overall teachers who had an agenda provided found it to be effective.

Planning time

The participating general education and special education teachers were asked if they had appropriate planning time. Two teachers (14.29%) indicated they agree there is enough planning

time. Three teachers (21.43%) were neutral regarding appropriate planning time. Seven teachers (50%) disagreed, they do not have appropriate planning time. Two teachers (14.29%) strongly disagreed with having enough planning time. Based on the respondent's answers more than half of the participants did not feel they have enough planning time and prep time. The table below shows individual responses given by the participating teachers who commented on the question regarding appropriate planning time.

The comments made by teachers included the following: Special educators do not have enough time to plan lessons with general education teachers who they co-teach with, complete IEP paper work, hold case conferences, and work on individual student goals. Many students in the classroom have various individual needs there is not enough time to plan and differentiate all of our lessons and assessments to meet student needs, we need someone who can solely work to plan for students' individual needs in the classroom.

Effectiveness

Participants were asked to rate the effectiveness of collaboration in their building. One teacher (7.14%) perceives collaboration to be extremely effective. Four teachers (28.57%) indicated collaboration is very effective. The remaining nine teachers (64.29%) elected that collaboration is somewhat effective in their school. Five teachers (35.71%) commented and each indicated there is not enough time for effective collaboration, and there needs to be more time for each department to meet with each other.

Communication

The participating teachers indicated the easiest way for them to communicate with the special education staff answers varied, this survey question allowed for teachers to click multiple responses. Eleven teachers (78.57%) indicated they prefer to communicate through e-mail, of those eleven teachers five (35.71%) included multiple methods of communication. Six teachers (42.86%) suggested a face to face conversation works best when time is allotted.

Thirteen teachers (92.86%) agreed that a face to face meeting was found to be effective. One teacher found face to face meeting extremely effective, twelve teacher's finds in person meetings are very effective, and one teacher indicated they were somewhat effective. Teachers felt receiving an IEP at a Glance (a shortened version of a full IEP) was beneficial. Five teachers (35.71%) found having an IEP at a Glance to be very effective. Eight teachers (57.14%) found the documents to be somewhat effective. Only one teacher who participated in this survey did not find the IEP at a Glance to be very effective for them.

Suggestions to Improve Communication

Ten teachers (71.42%) gave comments for how communication can be improved between special education and general education staff. Three teachers indicated having designated plan time outside of the normal preparation time to work on lesson plans would be beneficial. Rather than meeting as a whole building for collaboration day, when students are released 30 minutes early, and meeting more individually with co-teachers could help set the time aside needed for effective communication and planning. Two teachers (14.28%) suggested communication can be improved by having meetings about students and their accommodations at the beginning of the year. Rather than receiving their IEP's at a glance and then asking the special education teachers

questions as needed. Four teachers (28.57%) stated communication can be improved if they had the time to work with the special education staff to see more examples for accommodating assignments and test. One teacher (7.14%) suggested special education staff should come into more classes other than primarily math and language arts to provide assistance for special education students.

Conclusion

The participating teachers had very different views on collaboration. Some believed collaboration in the building was very effective and happened regularly, while others thought the complete opposite. Many of the positive and effective collaborative viewpoints came from teachers who indicated they co-teach regularly with the special education teachers. Other teachers indicated they rarely see or work with the special education staff.

Based on the given needs assessment there was correlation between how teachers like to communicate. About 80% of teachers prefer emailing as the primary source of communication between special education teachers and general education teachers. Most teachers preferred that method based on comments given, due to the convenience of emailing. Approximately 85% of teachers believed there is inadequate collaboration due to having a lack of time.

Based on the results of the needs assessment, a handbook will include various components and used to guide new special education teachers with efficient and effective communication and collaboration strategies. Giving teachers an outline of their job responsibilities, suggestions for how to go about setting up their classroom, and understanding the schools culture are all components of the handbook. Not only will new teachers in the building have an understanding

of the school and personnel, they will have suggestions and key points of communication and collaboration strategies the staff prefers.

Communication and Collaboration Strategies for New Special Education Teachers

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About the Author

My name is Tori Boehme, during the journey of obtaining my masters in special education there have been highs and lows. After I graduated in 2017 with my bachelor's degree, I did not take a break from college. I enrolled the next semester to begin this program. I worked as a para-professional for about three years in the special education department. At first, I thought the teachers were crazy, when I saw all their paperwork they had to do, but then as I seen student growth and the relationships I built with students, I knew this was a path I needed to pursue.

This is my 3rd year now as a special education teacher, the first year was rough and took a lot of adjusting, but now after learning and growing tremendously, I almost feel like a pro (that is until something new happens and in the special education world that can be daily). The changes in students and growth seen make the challenging behaviors and extensive paperwork all worth it. I notice a sense of security and comfort some students have towards me, they know I understand them and work with them to improve their current skills. To me many of the special education students are the underdogs in the academic world, and it is my job to help them have as many opportunities and learn just as a student without a disability does. Even though sometimes the students push me to a limit I did not know existed and my husband has to be my person shrink, the end of the year is always a little bitter-sweet when my kids are moving up and leaving my nest. I love watching them progress, but at the end of the day I do miss some of them dearly.

To me teaching isn't just a job, it's a lifestyle and part of my identity. If I could do any other job in the world, I have a hard time thinking of anything better.

About the Handbook

This handbook is intended for new teachers at the participating junior high school, it can be adapted to another school if needed. This is a brief guide to the world of special education here. There is no way to fit everything, but in my opinion and experience, finding the flow of a new school and how communication and collaboration takes place. This handbook is to help guide whoever is new into the building (primarily a special education teacher) with how communication and collaboration works here. Based on the current strategies, styles, and preferences from the general education teachers and administration.

Intro to your New Job



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Roles and responsibilities of a special educator:

Special educators have many roles and responsibilities. They teach students with and without disabilities multiple content areas in a day. Typically, a special education teacher will co-teach in a classroom, have classes of their own they teach, and provide resource time for students to do homework, study, and take a test.



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Special educators are responsible for collaborating with the general education teacher to know what content area is being discussed in class, and how it can relate to making progress towards the students IEP goals (Zaval, & Cornwell, 2017). Special education teachers are responsible for making sure the student is ready and has the skills needed to be successful in the general education classroom. Not all students in special education or even general education students will pass and master every concept and all content being learned, but the special education teacher can show progress, and implement the students individualized education plan to be as successful as possible (Bonati, 2018).

Special educators have a long list of responsibilities, creating lesson plans, helping students reach their academic or behavior goals, co-teaching, collaborating with teachers, staff, students, parents, and outside agencies is a short list of a special educator's responsibilities. Managing so many tasks can be challenging, special educators have to create schedules for their students, manage para-professionals, creating and finding curriculum support, the list continues, but these are the main issues new teachers have been found to struggle with (Gee, & Gonsier-Gerdin, 2018).

Special Educator Setting: Being a special educator is a very mobile job; special educators move around the building and work in different classes daily. Depending on the special educators' schedule, they can be in 3 or more classrooms per day. At some locations, special education teachers do not have their own classroom. They will have a small office space and use a cart to move their things around. In this building, both special educators have their own classroom, and are typically teaching classes 4 periods of the day. Schedules and co-teaching changes regularly depending on the students needs.

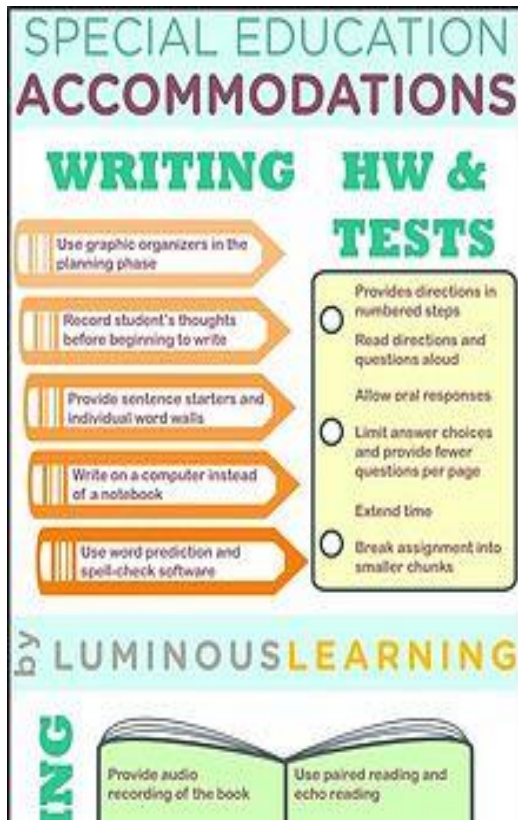


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Understanding the school and culture: This is one of the most diverse schools in Indiana, and in this school district. For the 2019-2020 school year, this school enrolled approximately 420 students in the 7th and 8th grade. This school currently has 109 English Learner students (26%), 219 students whom English is not the first language spoken at their home (52%), and currently have 42 Special Education students (10%). Approximately 85% of the participating junior high student demographics is either an English Learner, whose parents do not speak English at home, or receives special education services.



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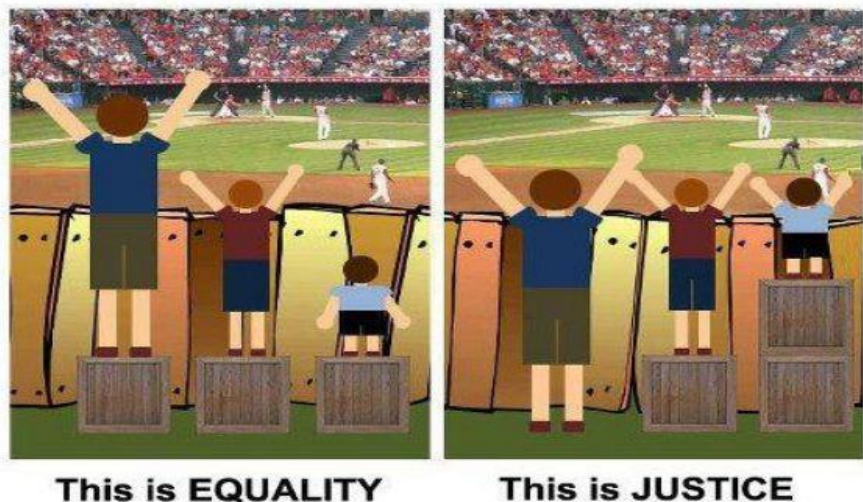
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Accommodation: The school is very accommodation friendly, there are many classes tailored to the student's level. Special education students typically score into the accommodated classes, which gives them almost all of their services already. Accommodated classes are structured around more intense student need, for example notes will be printed out, test questions are different, the resources they can use are provided for them, the class is structured around receiving more specially designed instruction. All schools are not this way, this school makes the special educator's job easier. The special educator does not have to modify or adapt many tests, because the general education teachers already have accommodated versions.

The general education classroom has multiple staff members in place during the classes of students who need more support. Some classes will have a general education and special education teacher co-teaching a class, while

others have a general education teacher and paraprofessional. Due to the diversity and needs of the school, there are translators in some classes. Having a translator helps bridge the language barrier, and a group of students will typically work together and in a small group with the translator.

Equality is not always Justice



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Your Classroom:

Your classroom is much more unique than a traditional general education classroom. A typical general education classroom in the secondary setting is based on the content taught. For example, a math classroom has many posters about formulas, math vocabulary, charts, exc. While a science class usually has posters and



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information that is science related. A special education classroom does not have one distinct content area displaying the theme of the classroom. Some classes have various subjects posted on the wall. Key points from math, science, history, and language can be on the walls. Not having a specific topic can make it hard to arrange and set up spaces in a special education classroom.

Setting up the classroom is totally up to the teacher. There are a few things that can be done based on this school's atmosphere. Special educators here teach many classes, currently language and math are divided between the two special education teachers in the building. One room resembles more of a math set up, while the other is more language arts focused. Having students during the day primarily working on one subject it is import to resemble and have multiple resources for that topic displayed in the classroom. In other areas of the class having stations, or designated subject resources will benefit students who come to the special education classroom for assistance from the special education teacher.

What students will you see: As a special education teacher, you work with a smaller population of students. Not all general education students will know who you are, or what your role in the school is. A small group of general education students will know if you co-teach in another classroom, coach a sport, word of mouth from other

students, or if they are in classes with special education students. Working with such a small group of students can be unsatisfying or make you feel like an outsider to the student population, but the small group you do work with can help combat those uneasy feelings. Special education students will typically see their teacher of service multiple times in one day. It could be to take a test for another class, they have direct services in your classroom, or they come to you for help from another class. Special education teachers do not have a set time they see the same kids everyday like general education teachers experience.

Just remember you will not directly work with most of the student population as a special education teacher, but you will develop a closer relationship with your special education students. The more services they receive the more they will come trickling the special educator's way.



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Intro into Collaboration



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Importance of Collaboration:

Collaboration is important in education in general, special educators have many people they work with inside and outside of the school building. Those who are involved in the student's individual education plan all typically have a similar agenda, how to make the student as successful in school and outside of school. Collaborating with others helps give a broad perspective of how students perform outside of the special education teacher presence.

Importance in Establishing Positive Relationships:

Forming positive and professional work relationships is a very important component for special education teachers. Mainly because, you cannot do your job without discussing things with general education teachers, and administration. I will warn you now, some general education teachers are awesome to work with, while others it's like pulling teeth to get them to make any accommodations or get feedback from them regarding your special education students.

Holding a conference or meeting prior to the start of the school year, with a list of expectations and things you will need from the general education teachers in order to help them and the students out will set a clear tone for the school year. If they have

no expectations, you will have a much more difficult time getting the information you need. Setting guidelines for accommodations, and giving them a list of all students and what their IEP indicated as a daily accommodation will help you and them. Setting deadlines for when they need to submit a test to you if they need help making changes to it for any special education student. Keeping the lines of communication open and setting consistent guidelines will help right away.

If a general education teacher does not want to follow the guidelines given to them, that's where things get tricky and having support from administration is important. No one wants to be the person who reports their colleague to the principal, but in some cases, it will need to be done. Make sure you've made multiple attempts to work with the general education teacher and provide alternatives to them for providing your services, and requesting of information. One way to approach if a general education teacher is not following all the students accommodations and services written in the IEP or the teacher is not providing you with the information needed for a case conference, progress monitoring, goals, or anything to benefit the student go have a direct one on one conversation with that teacher. It can and more than likely will be uncomfortable, but you are the one responsible for making sure that student is receiving everything needed to be successful. Take a copy of the student's IEP with you, and directly ask the general education teacher the information you need, or to provide you with evidence of the IEP being followed. Sometimes emails get over looked or quickly forgotten about, and the teacher may have all the information needed and they can quickly provide it to you at that point in person. If they say they need some time to gather the information, then give them a day and time you will be back to collect it.

If you have already communicated in all ways, and the general education teacher is still not following or providing what you need, that when you take all data and communication logs to your administration. Ideally, the principal will send out a friendly reminder to all staff about what special education teachers need or what is expected of them. If there are still issues, then it becomes an issue larger than you, and administration should take care of it. If it does not change or administration at your school does not help you, then go to the special education administration, they are the last resort, and they will not take the situation lightly at all.

While that is all worst-case scenario, it does happen, but hopefully not often. Typically, special education teachers will need to take the lead and be proactive on building the relationship with the general education staff. Sending out routine emails and asking if they need any assistance or have any concerns will open the lines of

communication, and makes them feel like you are actively participating in the students learning. Do not only communicate with staff when you need something, make sure you are catering to their needs as well. It promotes a healthy and balanced relationship. If they do provide some concerns do not dismiss them right away, even if it is a concern that you already know about and are actively working towards finding a solution. Listen to them, and provide them with whatever information or intervention that may work for the student. Typically, they will come to you, and hope you have an answer for everything, but that is not realistic. Just make sure you show concern and take initiative to help find an answer or give them some guidance on whatever situation is present.

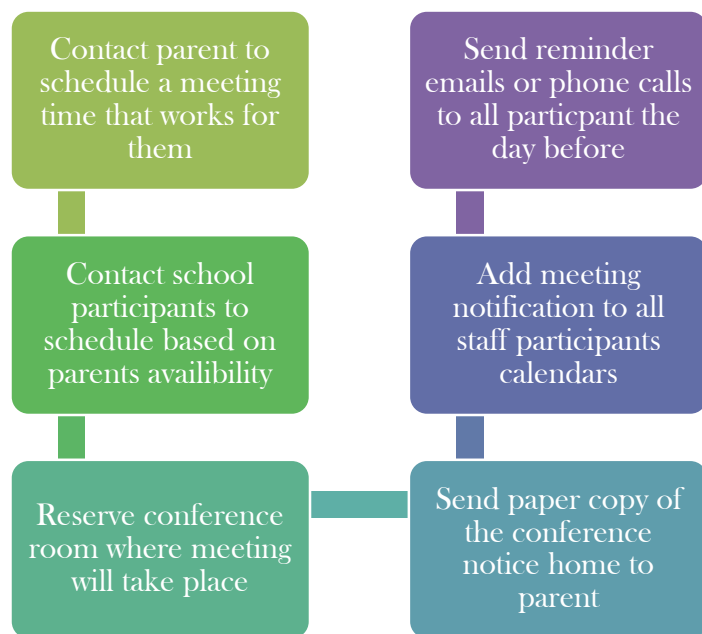
Having a positive relationship is the main foundation for having effective communication and collaboration with anyone in the building. The more open and comfortable everyone is with one another, the more that will be accomplished for students. It can and will be difficult at times, but even when it is someone you clash with, you have to keep the effort and just keep conversation student related.

Who you Collaborate with:

Collaboration in special education means you will need to work with a lot of different people. Here are some examples: Parents, students, general education teachers, principal, assistance principal, guidance counselor, secretary's, treasurers, transportation, occupational therapist, speech therapist, life skills coaches, athletic coaches, special services administration, and the students previous or future school. That is a list of the typical people a special education teacher will frequently talk with. There are many more people depending on the severity of the student and where they are coming from that will need to be considered when collaborating about the student.

Setting for Collaboration:

Collaboration typically takes place in the school setting. Typically, parents and outside agencies will come to the school to have a meeting and discuss information regarding their child. In special certain cases, the special education teacher can leave the building to consult with parents if they are unable to make it to the school or the student is in a different placement. For example, if a student is placed on homebound and the special education teacher elects to provide the services for the student, they will need to meet with them in a public place, typically in a library.



In the school setting where approximately 95% of meetings will take place, is generally in the conference room. Be sure to reserve the conference room prior to the meeting, so staff members know it is occupied and it ensures your meeting will begin on time and likely to have less disruptions. When it is a meeting that only includes school staff, it can take place in the classroom with no students present. Typically, this setting would take place if the meeting is after school.

Scheduling a Collaboration Meeting: To schedule a meeting regarding a student or student content, sending out an invite with time for the intended participants to join is one of the first and most important steps. If the group is larger and more people need to be involved, the earlier this meeting is scheduled the higher chances of everyone being able to attend. Giving at least a two-week notice, if possible, is a good starting point. If an incident occurs and the meeting needs to be held the same day or within a couple days, trying to find a common time for everyone can be more difficult. It is possible with administration support if the meeting is urgent, they can help find solutions to make sure everyone is available or excused from another duty or meeting they have at the time.

When sending out an invite, a paper copy and digital copy are always a good idea. Sending an email and placing it on staff's electronic calendars with reminder alerts are some proactive ways their busy minds can remember the meeting. Giving another form of reminder, like a paper copy, can help those who like to hang their reminders or place them in a spot they often check. There are different strategies that can be used, but giving reminders always helps, teachers tend to forget things unless it is written down.



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When scheduling a meeting with a parent, always send a notification home. Some parents will request a phone call reminder the day before and a couple hours prior to the conference. If a parent requests a you to call them prior to the conference, be sure to set yourself up to remember to contact them. Writing a sticky note or giving yourself a digital reminder are a couple simple ways to remember.

Preparing for a Collaboration Meeting: Once everyone is invited, and the meeting is scheduled the next part is just as important. Making sure you are prepared for the meeting. Having information on the student, data regarding the meeting topic, agendas, and also letting the invitees know what they need to bring and how to prepare for the meeting.

Creating an agenda for the meeting purpose and providing a copy to are the invitees is a good way to keep everyone on track and know what to expect from the meeting. If this can be given to them prior, it can allow them to gather information and actively participate in the discussion. If it cannot be given prior it is still a good strategy to keep the meeting focused and moving, without getting off topic or taking up more time than needed. Regardless of how, make sure the individuals whom you wish to participate in the meeting know the topic. Otherwise, calling them all together not knowing what will be discussed can waste time and not as much progress will be made.

Communication for Collaboration: Communication is huge, all of the above listed categories and strategies given are different forms of communication that can be used to make your life as a special education teacher easier. Being clear, concise, and making sure all of your ducks are in a row prior will save time, energy, and ultimately makes everything run more efficiently. Being clear and making



Make sure all participants are reminded and scheduled to attend the meeting

Have your data ready, test scores, progress monitoring, behavior, attendance, goals, exc.

Create and send agenda out prior to all participants

Make sure all participants know their role and what they need in order to be prepared for the meeting

sure the line of communication is always open can help ensure your relationship with general education teachers, outside agencies, and parents feel comfortable talking and staying up to date on students' progress.

Some suggestions to keep the line of communication open and clear, is to make sure you have time to be available to talk with others. Either during your preparation period, before school, or after school. Give staff, parents, and students certain times of the day the most consistently works with you schedule for a face to face or phone conversation. Many teachers prefer face to face, so giving a known time for individuals to meet with you keeps the door open for communication.



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Case Conference Info

Planning for a Case Conference

Case conferences can happen for many reasons, the most common is an annual case conference regarding the student who receives special education services. Other common conferences we have here are move-ins, manifestation determinations, and revising IEP's. To plan for a case conference, they all have similar information that is needed, for example the present levels, behavior, and concerns will always need to be updated to reflect the students most up to date information. Some meetings will require additional preparation and planning if there are outside agencies involved or if the student is up for expulsion. Here is a basic conference checklist:

Planning for Case Conferences:

- ✓ What is the purpose for the conference? (Annual, Move-in, Revise, BIP)
- ✓ Who needs to attend the meeting?
 - Make sure you have coordinated with those who are required to attend the conference prior to scheduling the conference
 - i.e. ~ student with speech services, the speech therapist needs to be consulted when scheduling the conference (This also includes parents)
 - Make sure to have the written consent form for general education teachers excusal during meeting if they will not be attending the entire conference.
- ✓ What data needs to be brought to the meeting?
 - How will you gather that data?
 - Who is responsible for what data?- (Gen-ed, Guidance, Special Ed Teacher, Support) Make sure everyone is aware of their responsibility.
 - Data should be added to the IEP before the day of the case conference.
- ✓ How will the people be notified?

- Article 7 requires that parents receive a conference notification prior to the date of the conference.
- How will the notification be delivered?
- How will you notify other participating staff?
- ✓ Send a reminder the day before the conference to all attendees.
 - Adding an event on the school calendar and inviting all participants
- ✓ Develop an agenda for the Meeting
 - Sample is attached— You will need to customize the agenda to each Case Conference.
 - Designate a staff member who will take notes during the conference.
- ✓ Make sure to print a hard copy of the “Draft” IEP to take to the case conference in the event that the technology is temporarily out of order.
 - Print enough for everyone at the conference to follow along with, only print pages before provisions.

The Day of:

- ✓ It is always a good idea to check the attendance of those invited to the case conference, such as the general education teacher and student.
- ✓ Make sure on the day of conference that all equipment is in working order. It is a good idea to get everything set up before the conference begins so time will not be wasted.
- ✓ What to bring?
 - Student data tracking system, such as a student binder
 - Copy of the “Draft IEP”
 - Copy of Procedural Safeguards
- ✓ Stick to your agenda and make sure to develop an Action Plan when the meeting is over. This will give everyone a visual of everyone’s responsibility

Knowing Who to Invite: Knowing who to invite and when can be challenging, here is a basic table indicating who should be present or who to consider and the reasoning why:

CASE CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS CHART

Every Participant for a Case Conference **MUST** receive a Notice of Case Conference.

Teacher/School **MUST** keep detailed records of attempts to arrange a mutually agreed upon date, time, and place for the CC.

Who Must Be Invited?	Initial or Re-eval Review	Annual Conference Or Revision	Transition Conference	Move in Conference	When Student is over 18 years old	Can be Excused	Comments
Student	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	May choose not to participate.
Parent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No, <i>unless</i> the parent is students legal guardian	No	May choose not to participate. School must document at least 3 attempts to obtain parental participation. Obtaining a signature is required for initial placement.
Public Agency Rep. (principal, guidance counselor, or designee)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Responsible for appropriation of funds.
Teacher of Record	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Responsible for the development of the IEP.

General Educator	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, with <u>prior</u> parent consent	At least one teacher must participate if student participates in general education. Must provide written input to CCC if excused. No teacher required if student does not participate in general education.
M-Team Member	Yes	No, unless re-evaluation will be considered	No	Consult with your school psychologist	No	No	Do not invite if attendance is not required or deemed necessary.
Individual	Special Circumstances Requiring an Invitation					Can be Excused	Comments
Instructional Strategist	A person who can interpret the instructional implications the student's present levels of performance will have on programming and curricular decisions being made must be present.					N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This role may be fulfilled by the general education teacher, TOR, or any other member of the M-team.
Nonpublic School Representative	The nonpublic school will determine who represents them in developing a service plan.					No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation is required and may be in person or by other means.
Transition Services Agency Representative	Any agency likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition to adult services.					N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written consent of the parent or students 18+ years old is required in order to invite a representative of any such agency.

Excusing General Education Teacher: By law a general education teacher must attend the students case conference, no matter what type of conference it is. There must be planning that takes place in order for the general education teacher to not attend the entire IEP meeting. Listed below are the excusal procedures:

Excusal Procedures

- Under certain circumstances case conference participants may be excused by the parent for all or part of the case conference.
- Excusals must be established in writing and ahead of time.
- Excusals must not be used for emergency staff no-shows.
- Excusals require careful documentation and are documented through the IIEP program.

To be excused the following must occur:

- TOR must send the IIEP invitation to the parent, indicating the type of excusal the school is seeking.
- Parent must sign the consent and return to the TOR prior to the case conference
- Excused or partially excused participant must submit written input prior to the case conference for the committee's consideration.
- If parents decline to give permission for the requested excusal, the school must have all required case conference participants at the entire case conference.
- If parents agreed to the excusal but then verbally rescind that permission upon arrival to the case conference, the school has the right to reschedule the case conference at a time which allows all school participants to have adequate notice of their required attendance.

Case Conference Basics: Before Attending Your Case Conference- Think about how you can create a positive atmosphere.

- Choose your attitude- It can make a parent feel confident in you and the school working to help their child and it will determine how the conference will go.

Come prepared:

- Bring student data
- Bring hard copy of IEP
 - One for each attendant- better to have more than not enough
- Make sure all participants are present before bringing parent and student back
- Have teacher input from multiple teachers- especially the ones the student is struggling in
- Lead with something positive- Parents feel proud when they hear about the good things their student is doing, especially if they have behavior concerns and hear a lot of negative about their child. Give the parent and student if present to state their student strengths.
- Ensure that parent talks within the first 10 minutes- You want them to feel involved, and not feel like they are having a bunch of IEP information thrown at them.
- Take nothing personally- Parents may blame you for their student unsuccessful moments or they want them to have more “help” than what can be justified.
- Remain professional at all times- It can become frustrating when you feel personally attacked. If the conference is not going in a direction where the CC can agree, or you are being targeted, stop the meeting and ask to reschedule to address the concerns with administration and special services available to back you up.
- Consider seating arrangements- Have enough space for parent(s) and any they indicated they were going to bring to the conference to be near each other. Also, keeping yourself in a place near other staff members will help.
- Support the child if the parent attacks- Some parents do not have a lot of positive to say about their child, or they do not understand the struggle they have. Always try to

keep the best intentions for the student present, sometimes parents do not agree and combat them with data, and growth charts.

- Write it down or it never happened, and you can't prove it did. Make sure notes are taken, and everything discussed to change or agreed on to keep in place is well documented. If the person taking your notes during the conference does not take very good notes, add to them before finalizing the IEP, and give them a template to help better guide them with the note taking process.
- Keep the conference moving- Stick to your agenda, some parents will talk and go on and on about irrelevant topics. The agenda is to help keep the conference on track and see the progression of the conference.
- Make sure to follow through with an action plan- Whatever is discussed in the conference, and said will be done, make sure it is all taken seriously and steps are taken within a timely manner.
- Re-cap your discussion and decisions to wrap up- Make sure parent is aware of all the changes, and ask if they have any questions or if anyone else present needs anything clarified.

Amending an IEP: You will hold case conferences every year for students to map out their goals and services for the next school year. Sometimes the plan put in place for the student doesn't always work for the entire year, or the state makes some changes to the Indiana IEP program. When something changes causing the student's IEP to not reflect the needs of the student, it must be changed and updated. There are some cases where a case conference does not need to take place. Small things, like clerical errors, or if some notes were left out. If there is a major change like services, eligibility, or goals a conference must take place. Below is a guide to amending an IEP without a case conference:

Amending IEP Without a Conference

An IEP may be revised without a case conference:

- to correct an error in response to a compliance review
- to add or change information that was left out or misinterpreted in the IEP based on the discussion at the most recent conference.

An IEP may **not** be revised without a case conference:

- to make changes to a student's eligibility, goals, services or placement.

Procedures for Requesting an IEP Amendment Without a Case Conference:

1. Contact the parent(s) to discuss the need to amend the IEP and explain the process.
2. Ask for verbal consent to use the 'Agreement to Amend IEP Without Conference' form and amend the IEP.
 - a. If parent(s) do not give verbal consent to amend the IEP without a meeting, schedule a case conference to allow for discussion of the issues.
3. Complete the 'Amend IEP Without Conference' form indicating the needed revision(s).
4. Make the agreed upon revisions to the IEP, following the 'Revising the IEP outside of a CC' Checklist.
5. Finalize the revised IEP.
6. Save the form as 'Amend IEP' with the date of the revision (Ex: 'Amend IEP 2/2/15')
7. Upload the Amend form to the Documents page for that student.
8. Attach a copy of the Amend form to the front of the Revised IEP and send copies to the appropriate places:
 - a. Parent(s)
 - b. Special Services
 - c. School File
 - d. TOR file
9. The revised IEP will go into effect as soon as the amend form/IEP is signed or on the 11th instructional day after it was received by the parent(s).

Basic Case Conference Checklist: A checklist for a case conference gives you a good idea if everything is being completed during the meeting. One strategy especially if you are brand new to the special education world and have not held many conferences is to have one of these next to you and check each part off when it is completed. Having another teacher or public agency representative keeping track and making sure each component is being met can provide some constructive feedback. This form is something similar to what any observation looks like during a case conference from administration.

Case Conference Checklist

Name:		Observer/Title:		
Date:		Time:		
	Observed	Not Observed	Not Applicable	Comment
Required participants are on time				
Introductions were made				
An agenda was reviewed				
Parents rights were offered/given				
Present Levels were thoroughly discussed				
Parent input was encouraged				
Parent concerns were discussed and addressed				
A draft copy was projected/presented				
Case conference is run efficiently				
Information presented succinctly and clearly				
Was an active participant				
Shared accurate information				
Diffuses contentious situations				
Checks for understanding of all members				
Checks that all appropriate members are present or excusals are completed				
Follow up duties are clarified				
TOR displays professionalism at all times.				

Additional Notes:

Case Conference Agenda: Having an agenda is similar to the check list provided above. The difference in the two is the agenda will be passed out to everyone in the meeting to follow along with. This sample agenda works well for a ACR conference. If the conference meeting is for any other purpose this can be used as a guide, but other portions of the IEP may need to be the focus.

Case Conference Agenda

Annual Case Conference

Name of Student:

Date:

Welcome/Introductions/Purpose

Agenda Review

Procedural Safeguards

Update student/parent information

Review of student data- Present Levels of Performance, Progress Monitoring

Educational/Behavioral Concerns (Staff and Parental)

Education/Behavior Needs

Strategies/Interventions

Behavior Plan (If Needed)

Transition (If student will be 14 by next ACR)

Accommodations

Goals

Services/Support

LRE Placement- Rejections, Considerations

Plan for Review of Progress

Action Plan

Co-Teaching



What is co-teaching like here:

Co-teaching is being pushed more and more every year. The principal is a huge supporter and will quickly approve professional development days for teachers to go and learn more about co-teaching. She is very supportive of trying new things as long as there is data and it is a student success driven idea. She is very open to making the appropriate accommodations and allows a lot of flexibility as long as it is student based.

Co-teaching here currently looks for the 2019-2020 school year, one special education teacher focuses on math and the other on language arts. We work with one general education teacher for math, and one for language arts. Having each teacher focus on one subject area, and working with one main general education teacher, keeps the complexity of co-teaching simpler. It allows for the special education and general education teacher to have more of a rhythm, and not have to adapt to as many personalities and classroom procedures.

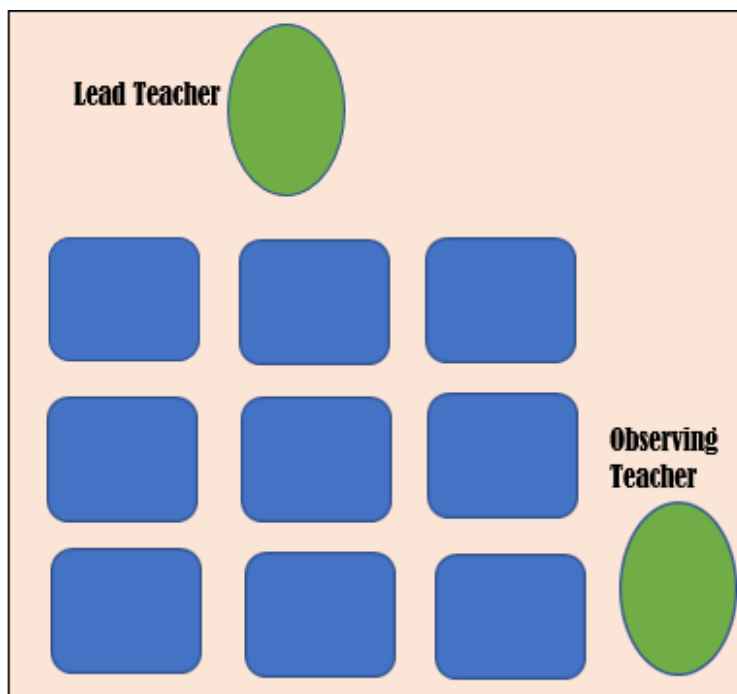
Co-teaching can be difficult, it takes a lot of planning, effort, and can quickly fail if either teacher does not do their part. If one teacher does not know what the focus of the class will be or understand the content, the class may not run nearly as smooth. It takes two people collaborating and communicating daily in order to have a successful co-taught class. Not every teacher can co-teach, and not every special

education teacher wants to co-teach. In this school, co-teaching is a big deal, and is done on a daily basis.

Simple words of advice, have a good relationship with your co-teacher. Keep enough distance to not get too close and personal, but also feel comfortable enough to speak your mind and give constructive criticism. Always make time to make sure you as the special education teacher is in the loop for all lessons, and activities that will be done in the class. If not, you will feel like an outsider and you want the students to view you and the general education teacher as equals. Having small groups, and creating activities for both teachers to lead is the best solution to feeling like equal partners.

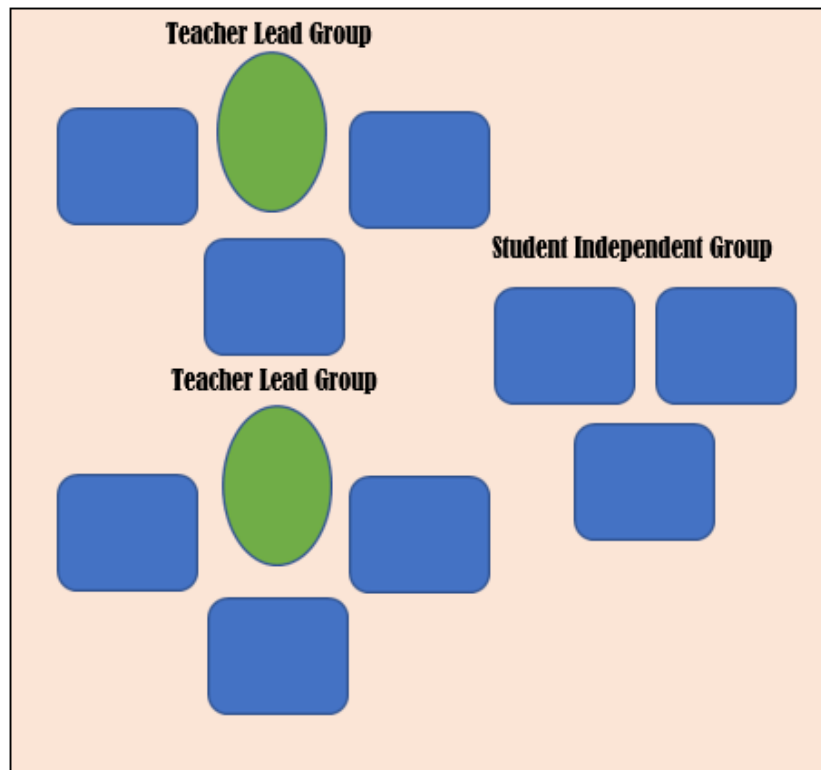
Different Styles of Co-Teaching:

There are multiple ways the classroom can be set up for co-teaching. One way typically happens when one teacher wants constructive criticism or feedback on how to improve the learning environment. This happens when **one teacher is leading the class and the other is observing**. Whether you are the leader or the observer this needs to



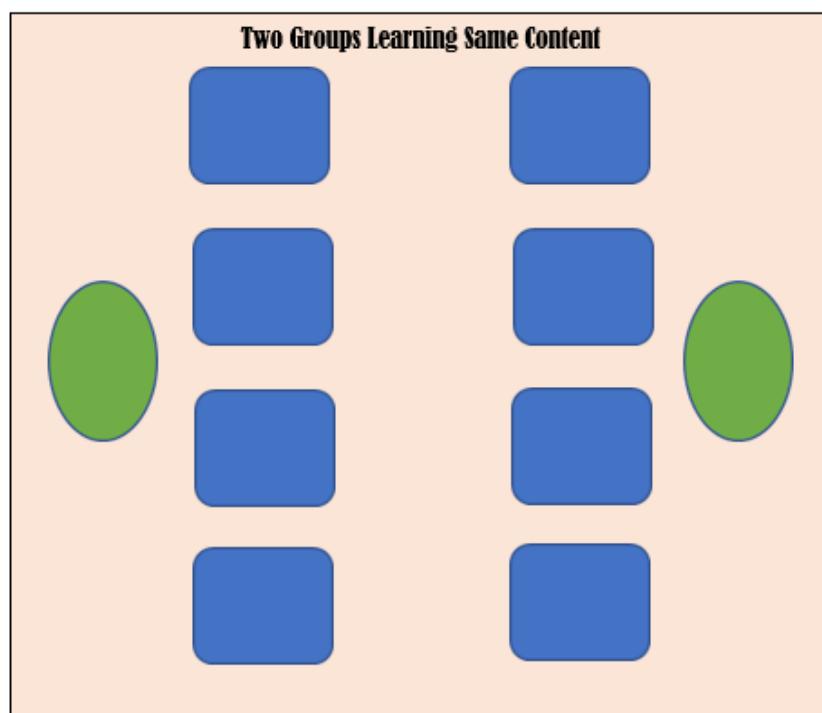
be planned out, so the teaching observing knows what things to look for. Sometimes you might want specific feedback on student engagement, delivery of instruction, or how the class is structured in general. When this happens the lead teacher is instructing students as if the observing teacher is not present. The observer is sitting back taking notes and gathering data.

Station teaching is another strategy, this is the one that is most used in this school. We use station teaching multiple times a week. Station teaching consist typically of three different groups of students. Both teachers in the class have a group they are working with and one group works independently. Each group rotates twice, making it where students are receiving instruction delivered in two different methods. One teacher is



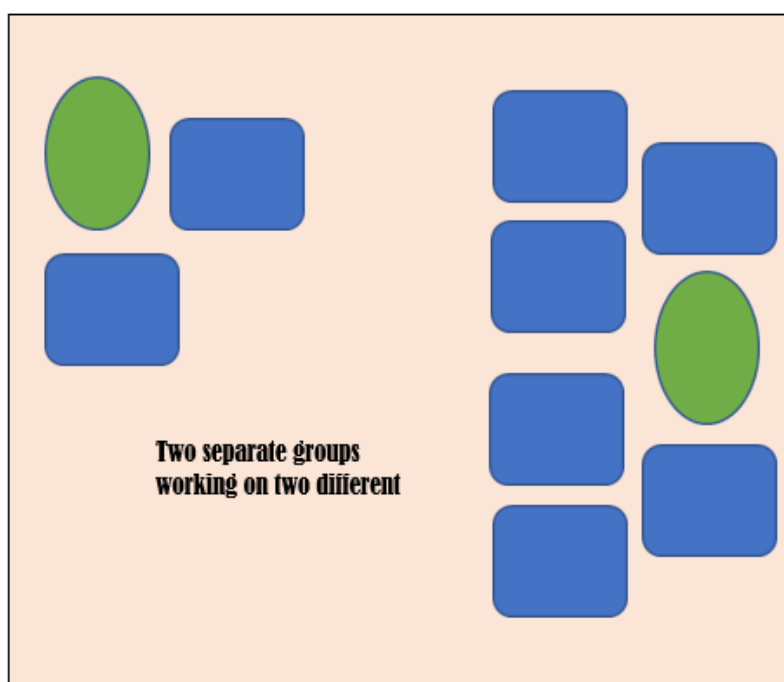
typically reviewing and connecting content to the newer material, while the other teacher is practicing the skills of the newer concept. The independent group is working on practice problems, problem solving with partners, or finishing the task from the first two groups. This method is very effective in allowing students to move around and receiving smaller group instruction.

Parallel teaching happens often, but not in the same “textbook” scenario that you may have learned about elsewhere. Parallel teaching is when both you and the general educator takes half of the class and teach them the same content. This happens, but

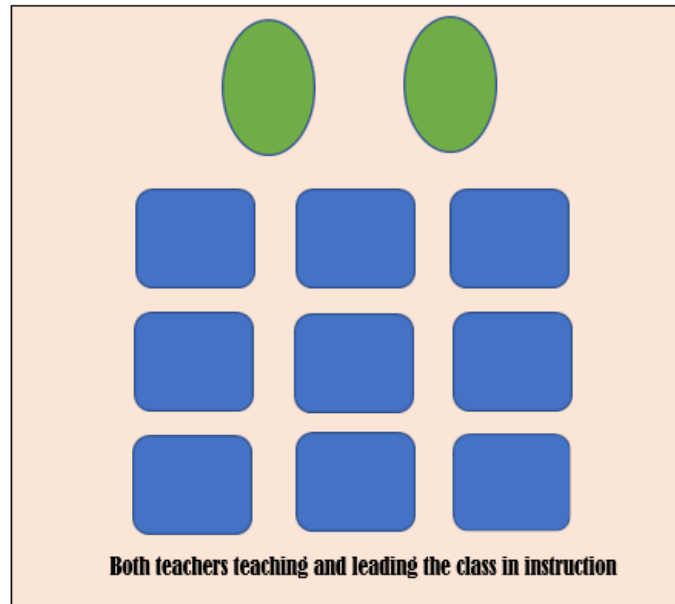


sometimes we separate rooms or go to another space to achieve this. When we are both doing this in the same room, it can become very loud and everyone tries to talk over one another. Usually we will teach the same content, but going to the special educator’s room can be more effective. If the general education teacher’s room is large enough to mitigate some of the noise, this method would be used in the traditional format.

Alternative Teaching is when a smaller portion of students need more time to grasp a concept, but the majority of the class is ready to move on. One teacher is working with the students who need the remediation or enrichment, when the other teacher is teaching the majority of the class something different. This happens when majority of students will not benefit from a whole group lesson.

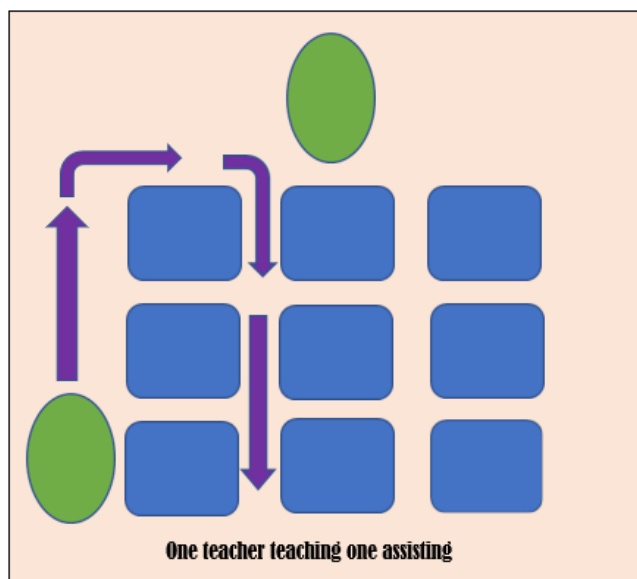


Team teaching when both teachers are leading the class. This strategy is best used when each teacher brings multiple ways to complete one problem, or share opposing viewpoints. Both teachers are typically in front teaching, and contributing similar amounts of information. This needs to be planned and sometimes practiced depending on the content being shared. If it is not planned or rehearsed, it can be awkward and the learning intention will not be as effective. This is a great strategy to



demonstrate team work and equality in the classroom, I would recommend doing this at least once a week or when a new topic is being introduced. It engages students, and they are more likely to pay attention if they view the learning process as a type of entertainment.

One teacher teaches while the other assist is the final most common co-teaching strategy. This one happens often, when new content cannot be delivered in any of the previous methods. This takes place when either instructions are being given or notes are being taken. Sometimes it is simpler to give all information as a whole group, and have the other teacher walk around and help. Keeping the whole group instruction



moving efficiently, the assistant teacher will help monitor behaviors, students being on task, helping students when they have a question so the lead teacher does not have to stop instruction. This is not ideal for showing true partnership and equality in the classroom, but it is necessary. One suggestion to keep it equal is switch up who will be teaching and who will be assisting. If it is always the general education teacher leading whole group instruction, the students will differentiate and not view both teachers as equal.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this Special Education Project was to investigate what areas of collaboration special education teachers needed more guidance in. Understanding and exploring key collaboration components and providing resources guided the development of the handbook created to help ensure new special education teachers at the participating junior high school has a practical resource. The handbook gave overviews of how the building prefers to collaborate and communicate, along with helpful suggestions most teachers only through experience.

Needs Assessment

The needs assessment survey was completed by 14 teachers in the participating junior high school located in the Midwest. There was a total of 10 questions on the survey and the majority of the questions had a comment box for teachers to leave a more descriptive answer. Many teachers consistently left comments expressing their viewpoints and justifying their responses. Based on the survey many teachers felt they need more designated time to meet with special education teachers in order to plan and be more effective for student learning. The survey was used to help develop the handbook and provided guidance for suggestions and the best ways to communicate and collaborate in the participating building.

Survey Results and Literature Review Connections

Based on the needs assessment survey results compared to the findings from previous literature review, there was a consistency based on teachers feeling they do not have enough time for effective collaboration and communication, but also understand the importance of it. In the

previous studies conducted on collaboration and communication in order to benefit students it is essential for teacher to come together to create a plan to enhance student growth. Teachers reported in the needs assessment survey those who co-teach collaborate the most, but those who do not co-teach really do not consult special education staff nearly as much as they could (Menlove, 2001). Having a positive relationship with special education staff, only increases the chance for more student growth.

Keeping students as the main focus for the importance in this matter is why having extra resources and training for both special education teachers and general education teachers is beneficial. Having a strong relationship, and plan to be successful will only benefit all involved. Teachers will feel more equality as reported in the need's assessment survey, many participants did not feel special education and general education have a true balance in partnership. By using this handbook, it can help become a guide special education teacher can use to set up a successful and beneficial method for collaboration and communication.

Implications from Study

Once the needs assessment survey was received back to the investigator, there were clearly concerns from the participating teachers regarding collaboration and communication in the building between general education and special education teachers. The first concern was the lack of time to effectively collaborate in order to co-teach, lesson plan, modify, and accommodate assignments. Approximately 75% of the participating teachers did not agree they had enough planning time in order to make all of the adaptations needed for special education students. Another concern driven from the survey is how only three teachers (21.43%) viewed special educators and general educators equally and shared the same amount of work load

regarding preparation and instruction for co-taught classes. With co-teaching being so important for both students and teachers, having an imbalance makes the whole experience less effective.

Strengths of Study

The study provided a lot of resourceful information. Information gathered through research, and the needs assessment generated by the investigator contributed to the information provided in the handbook. Based on the need's assessment survey, the preferred communication method was by email. The participants indicated this was the best method due to time limitations, and sending an email can be done quickly even while having students present. Another strength indicated was when the special education teacher has an agenda for a collaborative meeting, the process and discussion is more efficient and effective. Giving the participants the opportunity to add their own opinion and additional comments into the survey, allowed for them to honestly express their viewpoint for the current collaboration and communication methods used in the building. They were also able to provide suggestions to improve the school's overall communication and collaboration.

Limitations of the Study

This study used to help aid the development of the handbook could be improved in multiple ways. Having more direct survey questions regarding setting up co-teaching procedures, planning time, and adapting lessons for students. This study also had a very small population of potential participants. There was a total of 24 potential participants and 14 elected to partake in the survey. Having a larger poll of teachers to participate could have provided more suggestions regarding improving communication and collaboration to be addressed in the handbook. Given the lack of time provided to complete the study and research. The research could be broadened,

and involve more than one school. Comparing communication and collaboration strategies from various schools could provide useful information the investigator could implement into the handbook.

Handbook Information

The handbook provided is to be used as a resource for new special education teachers in the participating building. The handbook indicated what is currently working and how general education staff prefers to communicate and collaborate. Having this resource allows for the new teacher in the building to understand and grasp the schools norm in a quicker and less stressful manner. The main weakness of this project is the limited population and data collected to create the handbook. It can be used in other schools, but may not be as practical as what it is for the school where the data was collected from.

Suggestions for Future Research

For continuum of this study, it is recommended to gather information from teachers who co-teacher directly with special education teachers, and those who only consult with special education teachers regarding students. Having a separate survey for the two difference populations can provide more meaningful and relevant data. Creating a cohesive atmosphere for co-teaching, along with boundaries and needed assistance from those who do not directly work with special education. Understanding the importance of the different roles the special education teacher plays towards their colleagues.

Another suggestion is to include administration, and understand their role with special education teachers. Administration does work alongside and supports the special education department, especially for case conferences, student behavior, and student schedules.

Understanding how to develop an effective communication and collaborative plan can help everyone be on the same level of understanding for student success.

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APPENDIX



Paul Harding Junior High School

6501 Wayne Trace Fort Wayne, IN 46816
Phone: 260.446.0240 Fax: 260.446.0249

EAST ALLEN COUNTY SCHOOLS at www.eacs.k12.in.us

Vision: Every PHJH student will rise up to achieve personal success in learning and in life.

October 3, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Danielle Newman. I am the principal at Paul Harding Junior High School. I am aware of the request which Tori Groover would like to have my staff participate in a survey to help her gather information for her research project. I have agreed to allow Ms. Groover to provide the staff with the survey and for her to use the data to help develop a better understanding of special education teachers.

If there are additional questions which Ms. Groover needs to help support the findings to this research project we will also be willing to continue to provide her with more data.

Thank you for opportunity to provide you with some accurate and informative data for this research project.

Sincerely,

Danielle L. Newman

Mission: **Reach** every student, **Individualize** instruction, **Set** achievable goals, **Engage** in active learning... **Every Student...Every Day!!!**

Dear Staff,

My name is Tori Groover. I am a graduate student at Purdue University Fort Wayne. I am requesting your input and perspective for my research project to complete my thesis/special project.

I am inviting you to complete a survey about your knowledge of the benefits of collaboration, regarding special education students and staff. This survey is optional and will remain confidential. It is anonymous, and will only be used for the research portion of my assignment. This one-time survey will take you no longer than ten minutes to complete and your answers will be helpful in my study. After completion, the survey will be sent back to me, and stored where I only have access to them. The surveys will be disposed of once the study is complete. Mrs. Newman, the principal of Paul Haring Junior High, has given permission to send this survey to the staff members working in the building. I appreciate your participation and your time completing this survey. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions at grootm01@pfw.edu You may also contact my professor, Dr. Jeong-il Cho, Ph.D. at 260-481-6454 or choj@pfw.edu.

Thank you for taking your time, and helping provide data for my project,

Tori Groover

Collaboration with SPED

1. In co-teaching, both teachers are viewed as equal partners in delivering instruction and planning for instruction?

Please elaborate to question 1

//

2. Special educators and general educators have appropriate individual planning time?

Please elaborate to question 2

//

3. Regular collaboration happens between general education and special education teachers, regarding special education issues?

Please elaborate to question 3

4. Do special education staff typically have an agenda when going into collaboration meetings?

☐ Yes

☐ No

5. When an agenda is provided how ineffective or effective is it?

Please elaborate to Question 5

//

6. What is the easiest and best way for you to communicate with special education staff?

☐ Face to

☐ Face E-Mail

☐ Phone

What ways could communication be improved?

//

7. How effective is an IEP at a glance (shortened summary of IEP)?

8. How effective is an in-person meeting regarding special education students?

9. What is your biggest concern with collaborating between special education and general education teachers?

☐ Lack of time

☐ Personality conflict

☐ Content knowledge

Other, please provide your concerns.

10. Rate the effectiveness of collaboration in this building.

What are your suggestions for improving collaboration in this building?

//

Done



This Memo is Generated From the Purdue University Human Research Protection Program System, Cayuse.

Date: November 11, 2019

PI: JEONG-IL CHO

Department: PFW EDUC STUDIES

Re: Initial - IRB-2019-617

The Investigation of Collaboration Strategies Between General Education and Special Education Teachers

The Purdue University Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) has determined that the research project identified above qualifies as exempt from IRB review, under federal human subjects research regulations 45 CFR 46.104. The Category for this Exemption is listed below . Protocols exempted by the Purdue HRPP do not require regular renewal. However, The administrative check-in date is

November 11, 2022. The IRB must be notified when this study is closed. If a study closure request has not been initiated by this date, the HRPP will request study status update for the record.

Specific notes related to your study are found below.

Decision: Exempt

Category: Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests

(cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Findings:**Research Notes:**

Any modifications to the approved study must be submitted for review through Cayuse IRB. All approval letters and study documents are located within the Study Details in Cayuse IRB.

What are your responsibilities now, as you move forward with your research?

Document Retention: The PI is responsible for keeping all regulated documents, including IRB correspondence such as this letter, approved study documents, and signed consent forms for at least three (3) years following protocol closure for audit purposes. Documents regulated by HIPAA, such as Release Authorizations, must be maintained for six (6) years.

Site Permission: If your research is conducted at locations outside of Purdue

University (such as

<https://outlook.office.com/mail/inbox/id/AAQkAGJkZTE4NTM5LTY4NDQtNDI0Ni1hMWUzLWQ0NmRIYjM5OTdkNgAQACChuWCzsPNEjvJ6Lh0XS3w...> 1/2 Mail - Tori Groover - Outlook

schools, hospitals, or businesses), you must obtain written permission from all sites to recruit, consent, study, or observe participants. Generally, such permission comes in the form of a letter from the school superintendent, director, or manager. You must maintain a copy of this permission with study records.

Training: All researchers collecting or analyzing data from this study must renew training in human subjects research via the CITI Program (www.citiprogram.org) every 4 years. New personnel must complete training and be added to the protocol before beginning research with human participants or their data.

Modifications: Change to any aspect of this protocol or research personnel must be approved by the IRB before implementation, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects or others. In such situations, the IRB should still be notified immediately.

Unanticipated Problems/Adverse Events: Unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others, serious adverse events, and noncompliance with the approved protocol must be reported to the IRB immediately through an incident report. When in doubt, consult with the HRPP/IRB.

Monitoring: The HRPP reminds researchers that this study is subject to monitoring at any time by Purdue's HRPP staff, Institutional Review Board, Research Quality Assurance unit, or authorized external entities. Timely cooperation with monitoring procedures is an expectation of IRB approval.

Change of Institutions: If the PI leaves Purdue, the study must be closed or the PI must be replaced on the study or transferred to a new IRB. Studies without a Purdue University PI will be closed.

Other Approvals: This Purdue IRB approval covers only regulations related to human subjects research protections (e.g. 45 CFR 46). This determination does not constitute approval from any other Purdue campus departments, research sites, or outside agencies. The Principal Investigator and all researchers are required to affirm that the research meets all applicable local, state, and federal laws that may apply.

If you have questions about this determination or your responsibilities when conducting human subjects research on this project or any other, please do not hesitate to contact Purdue's HRPP at irb@purdue.edu or 765-494-5942. We are here to help!

Sincerely,

Purdue University Human Research Protection Program/ Institutional Review Board



Completion 02Se-
Expiration 01Se-
Record 2712414

This is to certify that:

Tori

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Human Research

Group 2. Social Behavioral Research Investigators and Key

1 - Basic

(Curriculum Group)
(Module)
(Learner Group)
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Purdue



Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w14f5a19f-bb36-4f68-a4f9-8f79d1e430df8-2712414

Survey Responses:

Question 1: In co-teaching, both teachers are viewed as equal partners in delivering instruction and planning for instruction?

ANSWER CHOICES—	RESPONSES—
Strongly agree	0.00% 0
Agree	21.43% 3
Neither agree nor disagree	42.86% 6
Disagree	28.57% 4
Strongly disagree	7.14% 1

Comments:

1. In some cases. Content area teachers need to take the lead, as SE teachers shouldn't have to be able to be experts in a number of subject areas.
2. N/A
3. In my opinion there will never be a 50/50 separation. One teacher will be the lead teacher in some form or another.
4. I have never experienced co-teaching
5. The special education will usually work a small group of her students while the teacher takes a small group and works with the other students.
6. While I feel that both teachers are SUPPOSED to be equal partners in instruction and planning, much of the instruction and planning is generally done by the general education teacher.
7. I think that for the most part you should be able to split the class and both teacher can take the lead in the class when they feel necessary. But I think there is a head teacher for attendance, and grading purposes.
8. I do not co-teach.
9. Sometimes. I think it truly depends on the relationship built between the two teachers and the understanding they both have for co-teaching.
10. I do not have much experience co-teaching in a professional setting.

11. The goal of co-teaching has always been that of equal, but it rarely works out that way. One of the teachers usually has a routine and more expertise, and this teacher tends to take a lead role. That is best case scenario. Sometimes the co-teacher is reluctant to take even an active role without much coaxing.

12. I believe it depends on the partnership and the expectations of the particular class. Sometimes a labeled co-teaching class could have two teachers in order to handle sheer numbers or a challenging class makeup. On the other hand, there are also arrangements with teachers who truly co-teach.

13. I feel that co-teachers should collaborate in the planning and facilitation of content

14. The teacher assigned to that classroom is responsible for planning and delivering instruction

Question 2: Special educators and general educators have appropriate individual planning time?

ANSWER CHOICES–	RESPONSES–
Strongly agree	0.00% 0
Agree	14.29% 2
Neither agree nor disagree	21.43% 3
Disagree	50.00% 7
Strongly disagree	14.29% 2

Comments:

1.N/A

2. N/A

3. There is never enough time to plan for students.

4. SPED teachers have more paperwork than gen ed teachers. I feel even gen ed teachers are very rushed

5. They have the same amount.

6. Due to the work load that a special educator accumulates with case conferences, IEPs, and instruction of their own classes, I feel that special educators do not get adequate planning time. They should receive more planning time than a general educator due to the larger work load.

7. I think that special educators, when required to coteach do not have the appropriate time for planning, because most of this time is working on iep's, or case conferences, or parent calls. They are not able to become masters in the classes that they may be coteaching in.

8. We do not have enough planning time when we have several students in our classrooms with many different needs and different IEPs to follow. If we are to address each individual's need and plan to meet those needs with every lesson we need someone who just does the planning for those students.

9. There never seems to be enough planning time, especially with all the responsibilities teachers have and all their different classes. Having to differentiate for those classes also takes a lot of time.

10. The amount expected of teachers vs. the amount of time they have to do it often requires either work outside of the workplace, or the sacrifice of either quality or sanity.

11. Planning time is like money. The more you have the more you need, and there never seems to be enough of it. With all the demands on educators, I feel that some things are done just enough to appease a supervisor, whereas other aspects are given a great deal of attention.

12. This depends on how a day is going. If there is sufficient coverage for absent teachers, there could be adequate time. Sometimes, especially when coverage is needed, this is not attained.

13. I think a planning period is kindly appropriated through our contracts; however, as a whole, I do feel that time teachers put in over the weekend and the time to do some of the other "busy" work (like meetings, phone calls, grades, documentation) is not fully acknowledged.

14. Planning time varies depending on the lesson

Question 3: Regular collaboration happens between general education and special education teachers, regarding special education issues?

ANSWER CHOICES–	RESPONSES–
Strongly agree	0.00% 0
Agree	42.86% 6
Neither agree nor disagree	21.43% 3
Disagree	28.57% 4
Strongly disagree	7.14% 1

Comments:

1. N/A
2. N/A
3. Depends on the staff and work environment.
4. I often overlook SPED teachers because of lack of time/ability to collaborate
5. When you coteach it is easy to collaborate.
6. While I feel collaboration does happen between general education and special education teachers whenever time is available, often times teachers do not always have common prep time for planning.
7. I think in the cotaught classes this is happening, but I think if it were a class the Sped teacher is not familiar with then the genEd teacher may not bring up issues to the sped teacher.
8. N/A
9. A lot of general education teachers do not take the time to reach out to special education teachers other than for IEPs. So much more can be done for special education students if more collaboration was done.
10. This does not appear to be a regular topic of group collaboration meetings.
11. I feel like this is done on an "as needed" basis, but it isn't regularly done.
12. I feel that there is a good relationship between our teachers. Communication is an integral part of that.

13. I feel there is a strong collaboration in our school.

14. N/A

Question 4: Do special education staff typically have an agenda when going into collaboration meetings?

ANSWER CHOICES—	RESPONSES—
Yes	78.57% 11
No	21.43% 3

Question 5: When an agenda is provided how ineffective or effective is it?

ANSWER CHOICES–	RESPONSES–
Extremely effective	0.00% 0
Very effective	50.00% 7
Somewhat effective	50.00% 7
Not so effective	0.00% 0
– Not at all effective	0.00% 0

Comments:

1. N/A
2. N/A
3. It is somewhat effective.
4. The meetings I've been in have been well run
5. We get things done.
6. N/A
7. When there is an agenda it allows us to budget our time better. We make sure we get things done, on time.
8. Many times the meetings get sidetracked by discussions about other students.
9. Agendas are sometimes provided. Gives a good overview of what to expect.
10. Our agendas are mostly outlines of what we can talk about. Most agendas lead by admin do not get 100% completed in a meeting.
11. N/A
12. In our reality, some of the preferred methods are good intentions, but may not be completely implemented at all times. Especially with large number classes.
13. N/A
14. N/A

Question 6: What is the easiest and best way for you to communicate with special education staff?

ANSWER CHOICES–	RESPONSES–
Face to Face	50.00% 7
E-Mail	78.57% 11
Phone	14.29% 2

Comments:

1. E-Mail
2. E-Mail
3. Face to Face; Depends on personnel and school
4. E-Mail; have SPED teachers stop by classrooms
5. E-Mail; it is fine.
6. Face to Face, E-Mail, Phone
7. Face to Face, E-Mail, Phone; I communicate with my sped teachers in every way possible. I tell them face to face, then I try to send an email. If the sped teacher has any questions they may call me to get a quick response.
8. Face to Face
9. E-Mail; Time allotted for face to face communication
10. The staff are already doing a good job.
11. E-Mail
12. Face to Face- For myself, coming out of the dark ages to better embrace and utilize technology would benefit me.
13. E-Mail
14. Face to Face, E-Mail

Question 7: How effective is an IEP at a glance (shortened summary of IEP)?

ANSWER CHOICES–	RESPONSES–
Extremely effective	0.00% 0
Very effective	35.71% 5
Somewhat effective	57.14% 8
Not so effective	7.14% 1
Not at all effective	0.00% 0

Question 8: How effective is an in-person meeting regarding special education students?

ANSWER CHOICES–	RESPONSES–
Extremely effective	7.14% 1
Very effective	85.71% 12
Somewhat effective	7.14% 1
Not so effective	0.00% 0
Not at all effective	0.00% 0

Question 9: What is your biggest concern with collaborating between special education and general education teachers?

ANSWER CHOICES–	RESPONSES–
Lack of time	85.71% 12
Personality conflict	7.14% 1
Content knowledge	7.14% 1

Comments:

1. Lack of time
2. Lack of time
3. Lack of time
4. Lack of time, content knowledge
5. Lack of time
6. Lack of time
7. Lack of time
8. Lack of time, personality conflict
9. Lack of time
10. Lack of time
11. A lot of the information in IEPs seems like it's copied and pasted from another one. It doesn't really seem individualized.
12. Lack of time
13. Lack of time
14. None

Question 10: Rate the effectiveness of collaboration in this building.

ANSWER CHOICES–	RESPONSES–
Extremely effective	7.14% 1
Very effective	28.57% 4
Somewhat effective	64.29% 9
Not so effective	0.00% 0
Not at all effective	0.00% 0

Comments:

1. N/A
2. N/A
3. N/A
4. N/A
5. It is fine.
6. There are always agendas for collaboration meetings, and sometimes there isn't adequate time to get everything accomplished.
7. N/A
8. N/A
9. Providing more collaboration time between departments
10. More teacher collaboration meetings. We only collaborate as teachers, about what we are actually teaching, 50% (at most).
11. We need to go to less meetings and use more quick emails to save time and to promote efficiency.
12. The lack of time is the biggest hindrance. Providing a means to cut down on the things that prevent a teacher from maximizing their time effectively.

13. N/A

14. N/A

Participant Number	Response
3	There is never enough time to plan for students.
4	SPED teachers have more paperwork than gen ed teachers. I feel even gen ed teachers are very rushed
6	Due to the work load that a special educator accumulates with case conferences, IEPs, and instruction of their own classes, I feel that special educators do not get adequate planning time. They should receive more planning time than a general educator due to the larger work load.
7	I think that special educators, when required to co-teach do not have the appropriate time for planning, because most of this time is working on IEP's, or case conferences, or parent calls. They are not able to become masters in the classes that they may be co-teaching in.
8	We do not have enough planning time when we have several students in our classrooms with many different needs and different IEPs to follow. If we are to address each individual's need and plan to meet those needs with every lesson we need someone who just does the planning for those students.
9	There never seems to be enough planning time, especially with all the responsibilities teachers have and all their different classes. Having to differentiate for those classes also takes a lot of time.
10	The amount expected of teachers vs. the amount of time they have to do it often requires either work outside of the workplace, or the sacrifice of either quality or sanity.
11	Planning time is like money. The more you have the more you need, and there never seems to be enough of it. With all the demands on educators, I feel that some things are done just enough to appease a supervisor, whereas other aspects are given a great deal of attention.
12	This depends on how a day is going. If there is sufficient coverage for absent teachers, there could be adequate time. Sometimes, especially when coverage is needed, this is not attained.
13	I think a planning period is kindly appropriated through our contracts; however, as a whole, I do feel that time teachers put in over the weekend and the time to do some of the other "busy" work (like meetings, phone calls, grades, documentation) is not fully acknowledged.