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Teachers Can Play Together: An approach to collaborating for

Inclusion

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Presenter’s Background:

Dr. Florence J. Schneider is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Behavioral Science at Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn, NY. She has a Ph.D. in Education from Capella University. Dr. Schneider’s research is in teacher education and her dissertation is titled “General Education Teacher Recommendations for the Inclusive Education of Students with Special Needs”. Dr. Schneider is a former special education teacher for the NYC Department of Education and United Cerebral Palsy.

Workshop Objectives:

- To recognize the terminology of collaboration.
- To describe the purpose of collaboration for inclusive education.
- To analyze the barriers to successful collaboration.
- To identify the various methods of co-teaching.

Topical Outline:

- A. Terminology of Collaboration.
- B. Importance of teachers sharing responsibility in the inclusive class.
- C. Activity A: Self Reflection.
- D. Barriers for collaboration and co-teaching within the classroom.
- E. Co-teaching methods.

Content of the Session:

The workshop looked at various methods of co-teaching and collaboration. Dr. Schneider discussed the various terms used when describing collaboration, such as contrived vs. robust collaboration, collaborative process vs. collaborative arrangement, and co-teaching.

The importance of teachers working together was called attention to by Dr. Schneider who asked the question, “Why play together?” She explained that teachers working and collaborating together encourage students’ and school’s success, promote individualism, and allow teachers to share resources and teaching techniques. Collaboration between teachers also helps teachers to take more risks, try out new ideas and improve their self-efficacy. Furthermore, it allows engagement in ongoing interactive learning.

An activity was done by the participants called “Self Reflection”. In this activity participants answered a series of 10 questions by writing down 2-3 answers per each question. The questions asked were, “what type of teacher do you like? What makes an effective teacher? What do you do when you don’t know something? What do you do when you are frustrated? What are your management skills? What are you competent with? What do you like to do with friends? What do you like to do with family? What things are a part of your culture? What type of people do you choose to be around? and what are things you need to work on?”

Next, the participants were instructed to perform “the hunt”. Participants were asked to go around the room and look for other participants who had the same answers as they had. The purpose of this exercise was to familiarize participants with the differences in personalities, approaches, styles and outlooks.

Next, Dr. Schneider discussed the various barriers that prevent collaboration and co-teaching within the classroom. These barriers are limited time, differences in personalities, and diverse outlooks and beliefs. Dr Schneider ended the session by providing participants with a handout on the various co-teaching methods that can be used in the classroom to promote more effective sharing of responsibility. Examples of methods discussed are team teaching, rotation, supportive learning, 1 teach/ 1 assist, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, joint presentation, complimentary instruction, distinct sharing, debate format, interdependence in groups, demonstrate and analyze, and share.

Relevance to Inclusion:

Inclusive education is a hard and difficult task and teachers need training to learn teaching methods that promote success in the classroom. This session helped to identify ways for teachers to collaborate and work together in a classroom containing a diverse population. By learning and discussing various methods for collaboration and co-teaching, teachers are able to promote and foster an environment where inclusion can be maximized to benefit every student in the classroom.

Goals, Concerns and Issues for Future Work:

Dr. Schneider expressed that it is vital for teachers to be prepared for diverse populations. She stated that attending workshops is necessary to improve attitudes and commitment towards students with special needs. For inclusion to be effective, teachers need to be willing to work together for the benefit of their students.