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Collaborative Practices in Special Education: An Exploratory Study

Evelyn Tang  
*Dominican University of California*

Blanka Pentek  
*Dominican University of California*

Laura Greiss Hess  
*Department of Occupational Therapy, Dominican University of California*

Katherine Sadoff  
*Dominican University of California*

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The purpose of this study was to examine the CMC in a broader context.

**Introduction and Purpose**

- Professional collaboration in special education is essential for student success (Barnes & Turner, 2000).
- However, IDEA legislation does not guide how such collaboration should take place (Pub. L. 108–446).
- The Conceptual Model for Collaboration (CMC) created by Czuleger and colleagues (2016) described professional collaborative practices of a transdisciplinary team at a special education center.

**Design**

- Quantitative exploratory design - online survey.
- Participants from a SELPA in northern California, n=27 (~30% response rate).

**Participants**

- Special Education Teacher
- Behavior Therapist
- Speech Language Pathologist
- Occupational Therapist
- Registered Nurse
- PT Specialist
- OT Specialist
- Social Worker
- Vision Specialist
- Administrator

97% of participants agree that good collaboration leads to improved student outcomes and professional development.

**Results**

**Question 1: What are common facilitators and barriers to collaboration and how does it take place?**

**Question 2: What is the frequency of collaboration in different classroom types and age ranges?**

**Question 3: How much are sensory-motor programs prioritized in different classroom types and across age ranges?**

**Discussion**

- Over 80% of participants agreed on common facilitators to collaboration.
- Lack of time, large caseloads, and bad rapport are strong barriers to collaboration.
- Most collaboration takes place in IEP meetings, through email and text messaging.
- Frequency of collaboration is high in all classroom types and across all age ranges.
- Respect and understanding of OT have supported prioritization of sensory-motor programming for both the student and the classroom equally.

**Implications for Practice**

- Team members are committed to collaboration for (1) student outcomes and (2) professional development. Suggested strategies include:
  - Plan face to face meetings.
  - Use “virtual” methods of communication (e.g., email, texting, Google docs, etc.).
  - Promote your professional scope of practice as part of daily service delivery and make an effort to respect and understand other professional roles.
  - Partner with administrators to facilitate best practices in collaboration.
  - Prioritize rapport building as part of professional development, both formally and informally.
  - Collaborate with OT to build classroom based sensory motor programming.

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**References**


**Selected References**
