



Speech language pathology and education students engage in interprofessional collaborative practice to support children with special needs in preschool settings



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ABSTRACT

Speech language pathologists must be able to engage in interprofessional collaborative practice (ICP) with educators to support the education and care of young children with special needs and their caregivers in community-based settings (WHO Study Group). To prepare speech language pathology and early childhood special education students for “real world” ICP, we designed a semester-long interprofessional education (IPE) experience. Within the contexts of classroom discussions, team meetings inside and outside the classroom, and field-based activities in preschool settings, student teams learn how to engage in ICP (ICP) using a consultation model. Team members conduct routines-based assessments, develop functional goals, and implement outcomes-based intervention plans for young children with special needs. We assessed student learning using formative and summative assessment including end-of-semester surveys, written reflections, and case study overviews. Students agreed that, by participating in this IPE experience, they learned how to engage in the collaborative consultation process to support young children’s learning, and acquired core ICP competencies in the four domains of teams and teamwork, interprofessional communication, understanding roles and responsibilities, and values and ethics.

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Introduction

To ensure that young children with special needs achieve positive learning and social outcomes in educational settings, educators, social workers, and allied health professionals need to be prepared to engage in interprofessional collaborative practice.¹ Recognizing this need, faculty who train students in these disciplines have introduced into their curricula pre-service interprofessional education (IPE) experiences using classroom-based teaching methods such as case study discussions,^{2,3} faculty modeling and role playing,⁴ and workshops followed by small group activities.⁵ Less common in the literature are descriptions of field-based pre-service IPE experiences, even though IPE is considered most effective when the students’ learning takes place in work settings they will experience in their future clinical practice.⁶

Tourse, Mooney, Kline, and Davoren⁷ describe an interprofessional field experience for social work and education graduate students completing internships in an elementary

school setting. These internships were designed for graduate students with prior work experience and limited to four pairs of students. Dobbs-Oates and Wachter Morris⁸ describe another IPE experience in which undergraduate early childhood special education students each work with a child in a preschool classroom and consult with graduate counseling students about the child’s behavior. The student pairs engage in a series of mock Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings to review the child’s progress toward annual goals and make recommendations for new ones. The student pairs do not, however, develop or implement intervention strategies to address a functional goal during routines in the classroom. To our knowledge, there are no published studies on IPE experiences involving teams of early childhood special education (ECSE) and speech language pathology (SLP) students developing and implementing functional intervention plans with young children in preschool settings. We (one faculty member in SLP and one in ECSE) describe an innovative IPE experience that we created to fill this gap and help prepare our SLP and ECSE students for “real world” ICP. During this experience, students use an interprofessional collaborative consultation model⁹ to develop and implement functional intervention plans for

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Table 1
Semester outline of the consultation project: meeting topics, team roles and responsibilities, and ICP competencies¹⁰ developed during each stage.

Week	Meeting topics	Team roles and responsibilities	Interprofessional practice competencies (category)
Stage 1: Gaining entry and building relationships			
1		Student teacher (ST) gives <i>Project Description Letter</i> to preschool staff	Respecting the unique cultures, values, roles/responsibilities, and expertise of others (VE)
2	Project overview Building relationships	Consultants (Cs) send <i>Letters of Introduction</i> to PS staff after faculty review ST confirms date for Cs' first site visit	Developing trusting relationships (VE)
3		Cs visit classroom, meet staff ST submits <i>Program Overview</i> and signed <i>Family Consent</i> forms	
Stage 2: Gathering information			
4	Gathering information about child and environment	ST begins assessment of child and classroom environment Team submits a <i>Meeting Summary Form</i> ^a	Express one's knowledge and opinions to the team with confidence, clarity, and respect (CC) Listen actively, and encourage ideas and opinions of other team members (CC)
5	Conducting routines-based observations and interviews	ST submits <i>Quality Classroom Assessment</i> and <i>Child Assessment forms</i> Cs conduct RBIs with ST	
6		Cs submit <i>video recording of RBI</i> and <i>RBI Form</i> with notes and highlighted outcomes	
Stage 3: Developing functional goals			
7	Writing functional goals using assessment data Collecting baseline data	ST collects baseline data of target behavior Cs research intervention strategies Team determines process for completing tasks and sharing information Team submits draft of <i>Goal Planning Worksheet</i>	Engage other professionals in shared patient-centered problem-solving (TT) Engage diverse professionals to develop strategies to meet specific client needs (RR)
8	Documenting change using GAS Selecting intervention strategies	Team revises goal, assesses goal functionality, submits final <i>Goal Planning Worksheet</i> incorporating instructor feedback	
Stage 4: Identifying and implementing strategies			
9		ST submits <i>Goal Attainment Scale (GAS) form</i> with preliminary baseline data Cs submit <i>Activity Strategy Matrix</i>	Use knowledge, skills, and abilities of all professionals to provide quality care (RR) Communicate to clarify each member's responsibility in delivering plan (RR)
10	Implementing embedded intervention strategies	Team revises and resubmits documents based on instructor feedback ST implements plan and Cs observe ST on-site	Give timely, sensitive, instructive feedback to others about their performance (CC)
11	Having coaching conversations	Team has conversations about plan and progress	Engage self and others to constructively manage disagreements about values, roles, goals, and actions (TT)
Stage 5: Monitoring progress and adapting strategies			
12		Each team meets individually with instructors to review all data related to intervention plan	Recognize one's limitations in skills, knowledge, and abilities (RR)
13			
14	Evaluating child outcomes and team progress	Team plots and evaluates data, then submits <i>Case Study Overview</i>	Organize and communicate information in a form that is understandable, avoiding discipline-specific terminology (CC)
Stage 6: Evaluating outcomes and process			
15		All read <i>Case Study Overviews</i>	Manage ethical dilemmas specific to interprofessional patient/population-centered care situations (VE)
16		Panels of 3 teams present cases and respond to audience questions teams and individuals submit <i>written reflections</i>	Share accountability with other professions and communities (TT) Reflect on individual and team performance and improvement (TT)

CC = Interprofessional Communication; RR = Roles/Responsibilities; TT = Teams and Teamwork; VE = Values/Ethics; ST = Student Teacher; Cs = Co-Consultants.

^a Teams submit meeting summaries after each meeting. Documents and artifacts in italics are submitted by students for instructor evaluation.

Competencies adapted from the Interprofessional Education Collaborative Expert Panel's Report (2011, pp. 19–25)¹⁰.

preschool children with special needs in community-based preschool settings.

Format

This curricular resource is delivered to SLP and ECSE students in the form of a semester-long project embedded within courses in their respective curricula. The project components include large group instructor-led discussions in the university classroom, small group team meetings inside and outside of the classroom, and field-based activities conducted in community-based preschool settings.

Target audience

The students are first-year graduate students completing Master's degrees and licensure requirements in SLP and third-year

undergraduate students completing Bachelor's degrees and licensure requirements in ECSE.

Objectives

Students will:

- (1) learn how to engage in interprofessional consultation to support young children's learning in community-based preschool settings
- (2) integrate assessment data from routines-based classroom observations and interviews to identify functional learning goals and select appropriate intervention strategies
- (3) measure child outcome data and document the effectiveness of their functional intervention plan

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