FOLIO PAPER ONE: COLLABORATION SKILLS FOR EDUCATORS

FOLIO PAPER TWO: COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL

FOLIO PAPER THREE: INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION IN TRANSITION PLANNING

DONNA L. DUNPHY

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

Folio Paper One: Collaboration Skills For Educators

Folio Paper Two: Collaborative Partnerships Between Home and School

Folio Paper Three: Interagency Collaboration in Transition Planning

by

Donna L. Dunphy

A Paper Folio submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

Faculty of Education
Memorial University of Newfoundland

July, 1998

St. John's **Newfoundland**

Abstract

The Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education (1996) has issued policy documents to all schools, emphasizing collaboration in the delivery of services to students in the province. Educators are expected to implement collaborative practices in this delivery of services. In the absence of any direction within the policy documents, this paper addresses the educator's role when collaborating with school personnel. A brief history of collaboration within organizational structures is presented in order to interpret the current trend toward collaborative practices in school systems. A review of the literature clarifies the skills and the principles of collaboration within the context of consultation, team structures, and school reform initiatives. This paper provides educators with the information they require in order to enact collaborative practices, as outlined in government policy documents.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Collaboration Skills for Educators

Abstract.....i

Introduction.....1

Collaboration Within Organizational Structures.....3

Collaboration and School Reform.....4

Rationale for Collaboration Within Schools.....5

Consultation and Collaboration.....7

Collaboration and Team Efforts.....10

Characteristics That Enhance Collaborative Consultation.....14

Barriers to Collaborative Consultation.....16

Training Implications for Collaborative Consultation.....17

Concluding Comments.....19

References.....22

Introduction

One continuous theme recurring in the school reform literature is that of collaboration. Educational reformers are recognizing and emphasizing the importance of involving those within the educational system as problem solvers, as agents of change, and as collaborators in the educational change process (Englert & Tarrant, 1995; Friend & Cook, 1992; Harris, 1996; West, 1990). Reform initiatives in the schools in Newfoundland and Labrador impact on changing roles and relationships for those working in the educational system.

Department of Education (1996) policies and guidelines for the province of Newfoundland and Labrador emphasize the expectation that educators involved in the delivery of special services to students will collaborate with their peers, with parents, and with professionals from outside agencies. Yet little guidance on implementing collaboration has been given to educators. Although current guidelines refer to collaboration, Canning (1996), in a review of special education services in this province, noted that educators did not feel prepared or adequately trained in the collaborative process.

This paper introduces educators to the concept of collaboration through a literature review examining collaboration in the context of school reform, consultation, and team structures. Educators are presented with a brief history of collaboration as it

emerged within organizational structures and school reform initiatives. A definition of collaboration is presented and collaborative consultation within team structures is examined. Educators are then given the characteristics of collaborative consultation, with a description of skills required for this process. Barriers to collaborative consultation and training implications for preservice and inservice training for educators are presented in the final section of this paper. The information presented will assist educators to understand collaboration so that they can enact policy changes in the delivery of services to their students.

West (1990) described the role of educational collaboration as "one important key to professional sharing of best practices in the restructuring of schools" (p. 23). Collaboration is identified as necessary in order to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population in schools that have successfully restructured (Thousand & Villa, 1992). Collaboration among school professionals, however, is not the norm in most schools (Phillips & McCullough, 1990). This may be due in part to confusion about terms used, the place of collaboration in programming for individual students, and uncertainty about how collaboration affects the roles and expectations of those involved in the delivery of special services to students. Unless educators are aware of what collaboration is, and how they can implement collaborative practices, they will not be able to effectively carry out government policy. Therefore, it is important that the background and meaning of collaboration and collaborative consultation in team structures is examined, so that educators can improve their delivery of services to students. A brief examination of collaboration in organizational structures is warranted before the process of collaboration in today's educational organization can be examined.

Collaboration Within Organizational Structures

Trist (1977) anticipated the need for a new organizational paradigm necessary for the turbulent work environment of postindustrial society. He argued that new organizational designs required in the transition from an industrial to a postindustrial society needed to be based on collaborative principles. Trist noted that collaboration, rather than competition, was fundamental since "accompanying emergent social processes (would) need to be adaptive to cope with the new levels of interdependency, complexity, and uncertainty" (p. 270).

Collaboration was viewed as a value system, as a relational system in which individuals shared a common conceptual framework. Appley and Winder (1977) identified two important skills that foster a common conceptual framework among workers in the move from hierarchical to nonhierarchical systems in postindustrial society. They identified that participative decision making, and use of human support systems within the workplace, were necessary for building collaborative relations among members of an organization.

The involvement of educators in searching for better ways of relating to each other to solve problems is indicated by Friend and Cook (1996) when they discussed the need for collaboration in schools. They viewed collaboration as necessary to improve the organizational effectiveness of the educational system. Friend and Cook contended that the information explosion in our modern age has resulted in an increasing reliance on collaboration to improve organizational effectiveness, noting that "as a psychological

support, we are turning to collaboration and reliance on others to accomplish our goals" (p. 13).

It is interesting to note that these same concerns, interdependency, complexity, and uncertainty, that Trist (1977) referred to, are certainly descriptors that characterize the state of educational reform, particularly as it is being executed within Newfoundland and Labrador. The turbulent work environment that set the stage for the institution of qualitatively new solutions in the form of collaboration, as referred to by the authors writing two decades ago (Appley & Winder, 1977; Trist, 1977), is perhaps the impetus for the renewed interest in collaboration within the educational system today. Friend and Cook (1996) provided direction to educators for implementing collaborative practices within schools, to guide educators in improved service delivery to students.

Collaboration and School Reform

West (1990) delineated two phases of reform movements with the educational system which directly impacted on developing organizational structures for collaboration within the schools. He referred to the first as legislated learning (first wave reform), in the early 1970s, associated with school accountability, competency-based education, and performance contracting. The more recent reform movement, occurring under the term school restructuring (second wave reform), according to West, recognized that teachers, support services personnel, and administrators were the solution to school problems. He acknowledged that both first wave reform and second wave reform initiatives must exist in today's schools. West suggested initiatives that required collaboration to plan and

problem solve, using the collective expertise of educators to address instructional issues. The process of collaboration, then, addressed issues of first wave reform, through instituting practices which are concurrent with second wave reform, viewing educators as active participants in problem solving and decision making.

The current trends toward collaboration in reorganization in business, industry, and in our social institutions, are also visible in the reform movement within our school systems. Shared ownership and participative decision making are terms used in both business and school reform literature (Friend & Cook, 1996; Thousand & Villa, 1992). Collaborative practices that reformed business and industry have moved into the reform movement in our educational system, affecting the delivery of services to students. Educators must recognize, as Friend and Cook (1996) pointed out, that schools are a reflection of larger society, and that collaboration is "a societally mandated school innovation" (p. 13).

Rationale for Collaboration Within Schools

Collaboration is becoming increasingly important as professionals in all walks of life attempt to cope in a rapidly changing and increasingly complex society. Communication and collaboration skills are among the core skills identified as essential for survival in the 21st century global community work world (Conference Board of Canada, 1992; Thousand & Villa, 1992). Educators have a powerful opportunity to model and practice collaboration within the educational system and to communicate to their students the value of collaboration for the future.

Current initiatives to empower teachers (West, 1990) is a motivating factor for instituting collaborative teaming within schools, since these teams would be involved in participatory decision making. Thousand and Villa (1992) noted that collaboration within teams would result in shared ownership of problems, generation of creative solutions, exchange of skills, and persistence in working to attain a group goal. Instituting collaborative practices, then, is consistent with school reform initiatives that view educators and school personnel as the solution to school problems.

The integration of students with special needs is a major trend in North America which has further challenged educators in the 1990s. Jacobsen and Sawatsky (1993) noted that schools are increasingly being required to serve a broader student population with diverse needs as a result of changes in Canadian society. Collaboration and consultation have gained recognition as a result of initiatives which encouraged general and special educators to become more involved with each other in meeting the needs of students at risk for school failure (Karge, McClure, & Patton, 1995; Korinek & McLaughlin, 1996; Safran & Safran, 1996; Steinmiller & Steinmiller, 1996; Villa, Thousand, Nevin, & Malgeri, 1996). Villa et al. (1996) stated that, given the complexity and diversity of today's learners in today's rapidly changing life contexts, collaboration with families, across disciplines, and among agencies is not optional. In order to meet the diverse and complex needs of children eligible for special education services, educational personnel must collaborate with one another and with the families of these children.

Educators in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador are also working to meet diverse needs among the student population. The policies articulated by authors of the Department of Education (1996) guidelines emphasize collaboration as a necessary

practice among educators, particularly among those dealing with students with special needs. Educators must recognize that the move to collaborative practices in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador is part of a nationwide movement. When preparing themselves as collaborators in the educational change process, educators are also preparing themselves with the skills necessary to cope with the work world of the future.

Consultation and Collaboration

Consultation within schools has been widely described in the literature for counseling psychology, school psychology, special education, and other special services (Gutkin, 1996; Idol & Baran, 1992; Paisley & Peace, 1995). Fuchs and Fuchs (1996) contended that consultation is an educational technology because it is specific, is applied systematically, and is implemented repeatedly in various settings. As an educational technology, consultation addresses important service delivery needs and positively impacts on the lives of students and teachers. School based consultation services are considered to be a crucial and expanding element of professional services for students with special needs (Friend & Cook, 1996; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1996; Gutkin & Nemeth, 1997; Sheridan, Welch, & Orme, 1996). In the 1990s, school counselors are increasingly being called upon to focus school counseling services on programs that are collaborative as well as comprehensive (Paisley & Peace, 1995).

In defining the term consultation, Friend and Cook (1996) consolidated key elements of various definitions, summarizing that "school consultation is a voluntary process in which one professional assists another to address a problem concerning a third

party" (p. 22). Key characteristics of consultation include its voluntary nature, problem solving emphasis, and attention to process as well as outcomes, bringing about changes in the student, the individual consulting, or the system. In schools, consultation is typically triadic, involving three parties and an indirect relationship between the consultant and the student. Although the student is not a direct participant in this interaction, the student is the beneficiary of the process. Most often, the consultant identifies a consulting individual's problem with the student and prescribes strategies for resolving it. The consultant may or may not be involved in the implementation, intervention, or monitoring of stages, since involvement is generally confined to the diagnostic and recommendation stages only.

Rather than a separate form of consultation, Friend and Cook (1992) described collaboration as "a style of direct interaction between at least two coequal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal" (p. 5). In their later works, Friend and Cook (1996) referred to collaboration as "an approach to interaction (which) can be attached to the consultation process just as it can be attached to problem solving, assessing and teaching ... any of these modes of consultation can be implemented collaboratively" (p. 29). Friend and Cook (1996) identified several elements of collaboration which they termed defining characteristics of collaboration. They noted that collaboration is voluntary and requires parity among participants. Individuals who collaborate share accountability as well as resources. The collaboration process emerges from a sense of trust and mutual respect, and individuals who collaborate value this interpersonal style.

There may be some confusion surrounding the lack of agreement on the definitions of collaboration and consultation and the context in which the terms occur within different fields (Friend & Cook, 1996; Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb, & Nevin, 1986). Collaboration does not define a unique model of consultation. Rather than specifying what activity is occurring, it designates how an activity is occurring (Friend & Cook, 1996; Karge, McClure, & Patton, 1995). As an approach to interaction, collaboration can be applied at some consultation stages and not others. It differentiates between an expert oriented consultant and that of parity among consultants. A diversity of expertise is recognized as a valuable resource among those inclined to work collaboratively with others (Friend & Cook, 1996; Phillips & McCullough, 1990; Thousand & Villa, 1996; West, 1990).

Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb, and Nevin (1986) identified the collaborative process as one to be used in providing services for students with special needs. They noted that, in this process, diversity of expertise leads to more creative problem solving solutions to mutually defined problems. These solutions are different than those that would be reached independently and positively affect programming for students with special needs. Idol et al. (1986) referred to this pairing of collaboration with consultation as collaborative consultation and define it as follows: "Collaborative consultation is an interactive process which enables people with diverse expertise to generate creative solutions to mutually defined problems. The outcome is enhanced, altered, and different from the original solutions that any team member would produce independently" (p.1). Collaborative consultation can be applied to small group or team interactions, using

available resources and skills to address various learning needs. Collaborative consultation often occurs within a team approach to solving school based problems.

In summary, the distinction between consultation and collaboration is delineated by noting that, in traditional consultation formats, the consultant is viewed as an expert. Collaboration applied to consultation interactions results in interactions which are facilitative and supportive, rather than directive and prescriptive. The process that results is referred to as collaborative consultation. Mutuality and reciprocity distinguish collaborative consultation from the traditional forms of consultation. Collaborative consultation is particularly suited to the team structures outlined in Department of Education (1996) policy documents which note collaboration as the most effective means of delivering special services to students.

Collaboration and Team Efforts

Collaboration and consultation models gained recognition partially as a result of legislation which encouraged general education teachers to become more involved in programming for students at risk for school failure. Crealock (1996) noted that this legislation included Public Law 94-142, passed in the U.S. in 1975, to provide more positive schooling for students with handicaps. In Canada, the Amendment to the Education Act of Ontario (Bill 82) passed in 1980, and influenced provincial education legislation across Canada. This legislation involved teaching all students in regular classes in their neighborhood schools through appropriate instruction. As more students with learning problems appeared among an increasingly diverse student population,

special education teachers and resource specialists have been called upon to collaborate and consult with general educators to assist in meeting the needs of this population of students (Gutkin, 1996; Safran & Safran, 1996; Steinmiller & Steinmiller, 1996).

The necessity of meeting diverse student needs has led to a growing emphasis on consultation services as general education teachers seek an infusion of supports in order to successfully carry out the mandate which has become entrenched in education legislation. Gutkin (1996) maintained that collaborative consultation is a common element and central theme undergirding all approaches to school based consultation, since it encourages the sharing of ideas and insights and enhances the commitment to the intervention treatment plans generated throughout the consultation process.

When the consultation process is enacted in a planning team process (as outlined in the Special Education Policy Manual, Department of Education, 1992), general and special educators, along with other professionals and parents, meet to address the needs of an individual student in a process that requires collaborative planning. The members of the team, then, engage in collaborative consultation because they pool their expertise and resources to identify a mutual goal (addressing a student's needs). Interactions are reciprocal and problem solving and decision making is a shared responsibility. The members of the team assume joint ownership of the process.

Program planning teams in schools exist for a number of reasons. These reasons include inappropriate referrals to special education, ineffective general classroom interventions, and the need for greater collaboration among teachers to explore strategies to assist students. The necessity for expanded consultation services for students with special needs has resulted in the formation of school based teams which assist teachers to

meet these special needs. These teacher assistance teams are group oriented and collaborative by definition. These teams are very much in keeping with the latest school reform movements because the teachers making up the teams are empowered to problem solve and make decisions regarding student needs and programming (Safran & Safran, 1996).

Recognizing the benefits of teaming to address student needs, the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education (1996) released Programming for Individual Needs: Prereferral Intervention, a manual detailing the prereferral intervention process. This guide is intended "to enable schools to collaboratively plan for individual student needs" (p. 11). This is to be carried out within the overall framework that has been detailed in the Special Education Policy Manual (1992), outlining the program planning team process. The Department of Education's (1996) guide is an elaboration of the prereferral stage of the process, encouraging a school wide approach to accommodate a diversity of needs in the classroom, using collaborative problem solving in teacher assistance teams.

Friend and Cook (1996) noted that teams, by definition, share many of the same characteristics as collaboration and may be considered collaborative work groups. Calling it a team, however, does not ensure collaboration within the team structure. Among team members, educational collaboration yields changes in team member knowledge, skill, attitudes and/or behaviours, followed by changes in student and/or organizational outcomes (Idol & West, 1991). Effective team interactions reflect the same characteristics as collaboration, including mutual respect, trust, open

communication, consensual decision making, and sharing of expertise and resources to address mutually defined problems (Idol & West, 1991; Thousand & Villa, 1992).

Throughout the Department of Education's (1996) guide, classroom teachers are urged to collaborate with other classroom teachers and special education teachers to meet specific student needs through an intervention process. The guide does not detail principles of collaboration, nor does it outline any skills required for effective collaboration among educational personnel. Educators must become aware of the skills required for collaboration because they are expected to practice these within teams.

Prereferral intervention is cited throughout the literature as one effective means of collaborative consultation to meet the needs of students who are at risk (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1996; Gutkin, 1996; Safran & Safran, 1996). Prerefferal intervention strategies can lead to increases in maintaining children with special needs in the least restrictive environment. Collaborative working relationships can enhance the knowledge and skills of those involved in the process, upgrading their ability to successfully intervene before problems become critical. In mandating team structures within schools, however, specific guidelines for operational procedures were often not given. Team functioning has been adversely affected by ambiguity in expectations and accountability, lack of training and experience in working together, and lack of understanding of collaboration (Friend & Cook, 1996). Because collaboration is clearly identified by the Department of Education (1996) as necessary for fluid, problem-solving teams within schools, educational personnel must have a clear understanding of the characteristics that enhance collaboration. Educators need not be overwhelmed by the process, since Canning (1996), when recognizing that teachers were often unprepared for working in collaborative

relationships, noted that "true collaboration (is) a difficult process even for those who have training in it" (p. 82).

Characteristics That Enhance Collaborative Consultation

The two most identified, critical elements of collaborative consultation are mutuality and reciprocity (Idol & Baran, 1992; Thousand & Villa, 1992; West, 1990). Mutuality involves shared ownership of an issue or a common problem, while reciprocity allows access to information and participation in decision making (West, 1990). The basic elements of the collaborative consultation process involve communication, interpersonal, and problem solving skills.

West and Cannon (1988) conducted an investigation to identify and validate essential collaborative consultation competencies needed by regular and special educators. The competencies were drawn from interdisciplinary literature and rated by a 77 member panel of professionals actively involved in research, training and/or practice related to consultation between regular and special educators. This panel of professionals represented the disciplines of school psychology, counseling, and general and special education. They identified five categories of characteristics and skills that enhanced collaborative consultation. They classified these as personal characteristics, skills in interactive communication, skills in collaborative problem solving, ability to serve as an agent of change, and sensitivity to different value belief systems.

Idol and Baran (1992) further identified several aspects of personal characteristics, interactive communication, and collaborative problem solving, that

enhanced collaborative consultation. These are characteristics and skills that are necessary for educators. Personal characteristics that enhance collaborative consultation include an ability to maintain rapport with all involved in the consultation process, an ability to identify and implement appropriate solutions to a problem, an ability to demonstrate flexibility and to accept and respect divergent points of view, and an ability to maintain a positive self-concept throughout the consultation process. Interactive communication skills involve communicating clearly (orally and in writing), demonstrating appropriate listening and responding skills, soliciting and giving feedback, and managing conflict and confrontation in order to maintain the collaboration. To engage in collaborative problem solving, educators need to recognize that working toward productive solutions requires setting common goals, generating alternative solutions to problems, integrating solutions into an action plan, and supporting participants throughout the implementation of the action plan (p. 210).

Harris (1996) maintained that it is also necessary for educators to understand their own knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, skills, values, and limitations, in order to collaborate effectively with their peers on a school based team. It would appear that, when educators become more reflective practitioners, they can evaluate their own level of readiness and willingness to work with other professionals in a collaborative, problem solving team. Educators can then work to develop the characteristics and skills that enhance collaborative consultation.

In summary, collaboration, when applied to the consultation process, empowers educators to assist one another in solving problems through sharing responsibility for students, recognizing that pooling talents and resources is mutually advantageous. Those

who engage in this process respect the diversity of expertise and resources available to solve problems, leading to increased knowledge and skills. The process is not an isolating one because educators can share responsibility for addressing student needs through shared ownership of the process. Recognizing that students remain a joint responsibility, educators can work toward common goals.

Barriers to Collaborative Consultation

One of the goals of collaboration in schools is to seek out additional ways to meet the needs of at risk students more effectively. Resistance from general education teachers and lack of administrative support are barriers to the process (Karge, McClure, & Patton, 1995). Practical barriers include insufficient time and resources, and inappropriate caseloads (Nowacek, 1992) If collaborative consultation is to be perceived as valued within the school, administrators must support the process by recognizing that it involves time and commitment for those involved to meet together (Phillips & McCullough, 1990).

Confusion about the role of the special educator in relation to the general educator in the collaborative consultation process can lead to feelings of apprehension and delay of implementation. A lack of staff development opportunities to develop the skills needed for effective collaboration is a deterrent to collaboration. In addition, limited classroom support as teachers adjust to their new roles as collaborators also impedes the process (Friend & Cook, 1996; King-Sears & Cummings, 1996).

Because general and special educators often have different training backgrounds, the two groups sometimes experience a dichotomy between their knowledge and instructional practices (Mercer, Lane, Jordan, Allsopp, & Eisele, 1996). This can result in different interpretations of problem areas, and, sometimes, a lack of confidence in skill levels regarding either the general or special education settings. Attitudinal barriers may emanate from a lack of mutual understanding of the distinct demands of the roles of general and special educators (Pugach & Johnson, 1995). Educators will require good communication skills in order to clarify roles and expectations. The absence of clearly defining these may inhibit the collaboration process (Karge, McClure, & Patton, 1995; Walther-Thomas, Bryant, & Land, 1996).

Training Implications for Collaboration

The implications for training professionals in the area of collaborative consultation requires recognition that the individuals involved may be at different levels of readiness. Many of the professionals involved in the educational system may have had prior exposure to, or even extensive training in, consultation skills. This would be particularly true for those involved in counseling programs, and, perhaps, for special educators, more so than for general educators (Mercer, Lane, Jordan, Allsopp & Eisele, 1996). General and special educators can learn much from the skills and training of the other. A greater understanding of the similarities and differences between the two may enable greater understanding of different perspectives (Steinmiller & Steinmiller, 1996). Teacher preparation and practice adds to the diversity which each group can bring to the

collaboration process. Working collaboratively, general and special educators can enhance each other's knowledge and skills.

Boyer and Bandy (1997) reviewed rural teachers' perceptions of training and teaching practices. They noted that their surveys underlined the importance of inservice programs to enable more extensive collaboration with district personnel. This is particularly necessary for both general and special educators in rural areas because they are often geographically isolated. This is also the case for many of the educators working in rural and remote areas in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Given the explosion of computer technology within our school systems, educators might be instructed in this medium, as a way to collaborate with a broader and more diverse population. Preparing educators to collaborate might involve use of teleconferencing in addition to use of the computer. This may extend the network of opportunities for collaboration for educators in rural districts.

Whatever the medium, the collaboration skills learned must also be shared by an increasingly diverse group of potential consultants. Training in collaboration skills can be carried out effectively in a multidisciplinary setting. Preservice preparatory course work in university programs, those preparing general educators, special educators, and counseling personnel to work in educational settings, should incorporate collaboration skills into their coursework. It is necessary to provide opportunities for students from different disciplines to practice their collaboration skills. The use of role play and video taping interactions would enable students to practice their skills and to increase confidence in their abilities. Peer coaching sessions for school meetings might also

provide some opportunities for educators to practice their skills and receive feedback and reinforcement.

Idol and West (1990) viewed consultation as an artful science, with training in both communication and interaction skills (e.g., active listening, ability to solicit and give feedback), as well as in the technical skills of effective teaching (e.g., classroom and behaviour management, implementation of individualized education programs). Preservice instruction, then, would involve training in both the art of interpersonal and communication skills, in addition to training in the skills of specific problem solving sequences.

The need for all educators to develop collaboration skills is critical. This is necessary especially for those professionals working with students with special needs. Crealock (1996), writing about the impact of Canadian legislation on the education of students with special needs, noted that "coupled with a fiscal need to rethink the best way to educate this population, the legislative protections of Canadian law have forced all Canadians to address these issues" (p. 13).

Concluding Comments

The history of collaboration within organizational structures has repeatedly made reference to the necessity for collaborative working relationships in order to survive in the workplace of the future. School reform movements have relied on the tenets of collaboration to affect positive changes in the educational system. The delivery of special services to students has embraced collaboration within consultation models as a most

effective and successful means of meeting legislation to provide the best educational services for all students. Collaboration transcends professional boundaries within the educational system and is particularly important when working to meet the diverse needs of today's students.

This introductory paper has presented an overview of collaboration within the context of current policy documents outlining the delivery of services to the students in this province. Although the guidelines from the Department of Education (1996) clearly articulate the expectation that educators are to engage in collaboration, no further information on collaboration skills or practices is offered. Canning (1996), in a review of special education services in Newfoundland and Labrador, noted that educators did not feel prepared or adequately trained in the collaboration process. This paper provides educators with the information they require in order to enact collaborative practices.

Understanding the process of collaboration and working toward developing the skills necessary for effective collaboration, in training and in practice, should be the focus of all educators engaged in the delivery of services to students within our schools. Because school counselors and special educators often have more training in some of the skills identified in effective collaboration practices, and because these individuals most often are integral members of program planning teams for students with special needs, these professionals could assume a leadership role in preparing themselves and their colleagues to promote more collaborative consultation processes in their schools.

As pointed out by Appley and Winder (1977) and Trist (1977), work environments, as we move into the 21st century, will rely on collaboration skills to define the new organizational paradigm. The interdependency, complexity, and uncertainty that

initiated this shift certainly characterizes the state of educational systems today, particularly as they strive to meet the diverse and increasingly complex needs of today's learners. Inevitably, this will lead to growing demands for increasing levels of support and assistance from special services personnel, as well as placing more critical demands on general educators. Collaboration skills, then, will be among those skills necessary for all educators involved in meeting current and future diverse demands of students within our educational systems. Instituting collaborative practices will be beneficial to today's students, as well as serving as a bridge to the future, preparing those involved in the delivery of services to students to deal more effectively in the workplace of the 21st century.

The economic and political climate in this province is necessitating consolidation of resources and services and more accountability among service providers within the educational system. The institution of collaborative practices in our schools would not entail major expenditures of money. Rather, it emphasizes a greater investment of personal resources and time in committing to the principles of collaboration and working toward achieving the skills necessary to implement it. This can be done in preservice training programs for professionals preparing to work in the educational system, as well as through ongoing training for those already working within schools. The motivation for committing to it will require a recognition that collaborative consultation will result in the best practices for all students within the educational system.

References

Appley, D., & Winder, A. (1977). An evolving definition of collaboration and some implications for the world of work. The Journal of Applied Behavioural Science, 13, 279-291.

Boyer, W.A., & Bandy, H. (1997). Rural teachers' perceptions of the current state of inclusion: Knowledge, training, teaching practices, and adequacy of support systems. Exceptionality, 7, 1-18.

Canning, P. (1996). Special matters: The report of the review of special education. St. John's, NF: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Conference Board of Canada. (1992). Employability skills profile: What are employers looking for? Ottawa, OT: Government of Canada.

Crealock, C. (1996). Issues in Canadian legislation applied to students with special needs. International Journal of Special Education, 11, 13-20.

Department of Education. (1992). Special education policy manual. St John's, NF: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Department of Education, Division of Student Support Services. (1996). Programming for individual needs: Prereferral intervention. St. John's, NF: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Englert, C., & Tarrant, K. (1995). Creating collaborative cultures for educational change. Remedial and Special Education, 16, 325-336.

Friend, M., & Cook, L. (1992). Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals. New York: Longman.

Friend, M., & Cook, L. (1996). Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals, second edition. New York: Longman.

Fuchs, D., & Fuchs, L. (1996). Consultation as a technology and the politics of school reform. Remedial and Special Education, 17, 386-392.

Gutkin, T. (1996). Core elements of consultation service delivery for special service personnel: Rationale, practice, and some directions for the future. Remedial and Special Education, 17, 333-340.

Gutkin, T., & Nemeth, C. (1997). Selected factors impacting decision making in prereferral intervention and other school based teams: Exploring the intersection between school and social psychology. Journal of School Psychology, 35, 195-216.

Harris, K. (1996). Collaboration within a multicultural society: Issues for consideration. Remedial and Special Education, 17, 355-362.

Idol, L., & Baran, S. (1992). Elementary school counselors and special educators consulting together: Perilous pitfalls or opportunities to collaborate? Elementary School Guidance & Counseling, 26, 202-213.

Idol, L., Paolucci-Whitcomb, P., & Nevin, A. (1986). Collaborative consultation. Rockville, MD: Aspen Publications.

Idol, L., & West, J. (1991). Educational collaboration: A catalyst for effective schooling. Intervention in School and Clinic, 27, 70-78.

Jacobsen, S., & Sawatsky, D. (1993). Meeting the challenge of integrating students with special needs: Understanding, building and implementing integration as inclusion. Canadian Journal of Special Education, 9, 60-65.

Karge, B., McClure, M., & Patton, P. (1995). The success of collaboration resource programs for students with disabilities in grades 6 through 8. Remedial and Special Education, 16, 79-89.

King-Sears, M., & Cummings, C. (1996). Inclusive practice of classroom teachers. Remedial and Special Education, 17, 217-225.

Korinek, L., & McLaughlin, V. (1996). Preservice preparation for interdisciplinary collaboration: The intervention assistance teaming project. Contemporary Education, 68, 41-44.

Mercer, C., Lane, H., Jordan, L., Allsopp, D., & Eiselle, M. (1996). Empowering teachers and students with instructional choices in inclusive settings. Remedial and Special Education, 17, 226-236.

Nowacek, E.. (1992). Professional talk about teaching together: Interviews with five collaborating teachers. Intervention in School and Clinic, 27, 262-276.

Paisley, P.,& Peace, S. (1995). Developmental principles: A framework for school counseling programs. Elementary School Guidance & Counseling, 30, 85-93.

Phillips, V., & McCullough, L. (1990). Consultation-based programming: Instituting the collaborative ethic in schools. Exceptional Children, 56, 291-304.

Pugach, M., & Johnson, L. (1995). Unlocking expertise among classroom teachers through structured dialogue: Extending research on peer collaboration. Exceptional Children, 62, 101-110.

Safran, S., & Safran, J. (1996). Intervention assistance programs and prereferral teams: Directions for the twenty-first century. Remedial and Special Education, 17, 363-368.

Sheridan, S., Welsh, M., & Orme, S. (1996). Is consultation effective? A review of outcome research. Remedial and Special Education, 17, 341-354.

Steinmiller, G., & Steinmiller, R. (1996). Including special education children in the regular classroom: Changing roles of teachers. International Journal of Special Education, 11(2), 22-26.

Thousand, J., & Villa, R. (1992). Collaborative teams: A powerful tool in school restructuring. In R. Villa, J. Thousand, & W. Steinback (Eds.), Restructuring for Caring and Effective Education: An Administrative Guide to Creating Heterogeneous Schools (pp. 73-107). Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

Trist, E. (1977). Collaboration in work settings: A personal perspective. The Journal of Applied Behavioural Science, 13, 268-278.

Villa, R., Thousand, J., Nevin, A., & Malgeri, C. (1996). Instilling collaboration for inclusive schooling as a way of doing business in public schools. Remedial and Special Education, 17, 169-181.

Walther-Thomas, C., Bryant, M., & Land, S. (1996). Planning for effective co-teaching: The key to successful inclusion. Remedial and Special Education, 17, 255-264.

West, J. (1990). Educational collaboration in the restructuring of schools. Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 1, 23-40.

Folio Paper Two

Collaborative Partnerships Between Home and School

Abstract

Collaboration between educators and the families of their students promotes respectful partnerships and enhances the educational decision making process that is emphasized in policy documents released to all schools by the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education (1996). An examination of interaction styles between the home and the school, considering the unique needs of families with children with special needs, is addressed in this paper. A model for parent involvement in collaborative partnerships with educators is detailed, within the context of the program planning team process. It focuses on the educator's role in home-school collaboration, clarifying the terms enablement, empowerment, and advocacy. The collaborative model presented enhances current special education policies that promote parental involvement and collaborative teaming in the delivery of services to students with special needs.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Collaborative Partnerships Between Home and School

Abstract.....i

Introduction.....1

Families with Children with Special Needs.....3

Barriers to Parental Involvement.....5

Empowerment and Enablement.....6

Partnerships and Collaboration Skills.....9

Parent Involvement in the Collaboration Process.....11

Collaboration in the Program Planning Process.....13

An Elaborated Collaboration Model for Use in the Program Planning Process.....15

Concluding Comments.....19

References.....22

Families with Children with Special Needs

Families who have a child with special needs, like all families, may exhibit the qualities that are identified in different degrees and combinations among strong family units. These qualities include commitment to each other's welfare and happiness, sharing time, communication among family members, and a coping ability to deal with crisis. Families may also demonstrate problem solving, flexibility, adaptability, and a clear set of rules, values, and beliefs (Elksnin & Elksnin, 1989; Krehbiel & Kroth, 1991). Families with children with special needs often appear to experience levels of frustration as well as difficulties not encountered by other families (Lloyd, 1996; Simpson, 1990). These difficulties include a lack of feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction that can accompany parenting, as families experience hurt, frustration, and anger when they recognize their child's limitations, lack of independence, or adverse response from other children and adults in society (Simpson, 1990). In addition to the economic and social pressures experienced by most families in today's increasingly complex society, families with children with special needs may experience increased stress (Krehbiel & Kroth, 1991). Family background, socioeconomic resources, and support within the families and the community all affect the way the child with special needs is perceived and treated by the family (Lloyd, 1996).

Families are often dealing with various government departments, each working with their unique perspectives and protocols, often in isolation from each other. The quality of services available to families of children with special needs varies according to

the level of service needed and the availability of the service. In Newfoundland and Labrador, availability of required services is often dependent on geographic location, and families in isolated areas of the province may have difficulty accessing needed services for their children.

Families, like their individual children, move through developmental stages, experiencing different needs at various stages (Cobb & Reeve, 1991). Transition points for families of children with special needs are often very stressful as the child moves through different stages (e.g., the home to school transition, school to community living transition). Life events also give opportunity for families to reappraise their child's limitations and to come to terms of what is what might never be (e.g., getting a driver's license, independent living). Over the life span of the individual with special needs, families continually have to come to terms to readjust expectations, pursue services from community agencies, and plan for future accommodations.

Unless educators are familiar with the life cycle aspects of individuals with special needs and their families, "they might not appreciate the sadness that often recurs as parents have to work with the child and the 'system' in relation to new developmental or social milestones" (Fine, 1991, p.15). In working toward developing more respectful partnerships with families of children with special needs, educators must be aware of, and sensitive to, the unique challenges related to the child's and family's strengths and needs. Incorporating a collaborative approach, with families sharing in the responsibility for planning and implementing their child's interventions and program, requires that educators recognize that "the family is the handicapped child's most valuable resource" (Doll & Bolger, 1991, p. 197).

Barriers to Parental Involvement

Despite the urgent need for partnership between home and school, parents continue to be kept at a distance in most schools (Danyluk, 1996; Sawatzsky & Pare, 1996; Swap, 1993). This may be attributed to limited resources to support parental involvement or a lack of information about how to establish partnerships. In some schools, parental involvement may be considered intrusive by teachers and administrators. Some parents might feel less than comfortable in sharing their ideas, or may feel that the home and school roles are, and should remain, separate. Some parents may lack time and energy (particularly when caring for a child with special needs) to invest in the process. Diminishing services to students, amidst shrinking resources, also adds to the stress and isolation of the family and school systems (Fine & Gardner, 1994).

Some of the problems in home-school relationships may be due to longstanding negative beliefs and perceptions that the family and school may have of each other. The act of coming to the school, in itself, may evoke unpleasant memories of past school experiences for some families (Edwards & Foster, 1995). Mutual blaming may characterize many home-school relationships when the child is having a problem. Differing values and beliefs about handicapping conditions, parenting, and schooling, in addition to expectations and stereotypes, may hinder home-school communication (Fiedler, 1991).

The level of interpersonal communication skills possessed by parents and school personnel may impede interactions between the family and the school (Paget, 1991;

Royster & McLaughlin, 1996). Communication problems may exist among professionals participating in the team, and a lack of collaboration among professionals leads to further conflict and confusion among families. When there is no structure for resolving disagreements or conflicts, families may be confused and even intimidated by the process of meeting together (Sawatzky & Pare, 1996).

Relationships between home and school have often been uni-directional instead of reciprocal, with professionals operating from a position of authority and expertise (Fine & Gardner, 1994; Paget, 1991). When educators recognize communication difficulties as barriers, educators, together with families, can take responsibility to work toward reaching mutual solutions in a nonthreatening manner. Differences which exist between families and professionals can set the stage for positive change by generating creative energy from different points of view (Paget, 1991). Educators must work to overcome barriers by incorporating a collaborative approach with each family, encouraging the family to share in the responsibility for planning and implementing their child's program, and communicating to each a sense of shared responsibility for meeting the needs of the child.

Enablement and Empowerment

In working toward more effective models of relating family and school systems, educators must become familiar with new terms, such as enablement and empowerment. These concepts contrast with the traditionally used deficit model that has often characterized the family as deficient and in need of an ongoing, directive role by help

givers. Dunst and Trivette (1987) define these terms. "Enabling refers to creating opportunities for competence to be displayed and empowerment is reflected in a person perceiving him or herself as able to bring about change" (p. 445).

Variables that are likely to be enabling and to contribute to effective helping promote a sense of family empowerment (Dunst & Paget, 1991). Dunst and Paget termed these variables prehelping attitudes and beliefs (the help givers posture toward help seekers and helping relationships); help giving behaviors (the interactional styles used by help givers in the helping relationship); and posthelping responses and consequences (those influences of the help giver's behavior on the help seeker). Educators, particularly those involved in the delivery of special services, need to be aware of their communication styles reflected throughout the helping process as they interact with families. Educators communicate their readiness and willingness to communicate with families by being open and receptive to family involvement, by listening carefully and encouraging participation, and by demonstrating a willingness to support the efforts and decisions made by families throughout the program planning process.

Dunst and Trivette (1987) delineated several principles that have implications for the manner in which school personnel develop, implement, and evaluate their communication patterns with families. These principles enhance the likelihood that relationships will be proactive and empowering for families. These are critical to the understanding and enacting of the home-school collaboration model that will be presented later in this paper. These principles include being positive and proactive, recognizing that the assistance offered is congruent with the family's appraisal of their needs and that final decisions rest with the family. Educators must recognize that a

mutual relationship among individuals of equal status, based on mutual trust and information sharing, fosters a sense of partnership. Finally, promoting the family's natural support networks before supplanting them with professional services encourages a feeling of competence among family members and conveys a sense of cooperation and joint responsibility for problem solving. Engaging families in these ways help members of the family recognize that they have assumed an active and significant role in working to improve their own lives.

In addition to these principles, educators working toward more effective home-school partnerships should recognize the interests of each family member while acknowledging that the family determines its priorities among its competing responsibilities. When possible, educators should encourage the exploration of options from which families can choose, supporting families as they move through transition stages (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990). The family support emphasis is viewed as an interactive, sharing, and participative process that can empower children, families, and educators. Educators must be aware of key elements in this process, recognizing and including all aspects of the child-family system, demonstrating empathy through understanding and relating to families in positive and supportive ways, and empowering families by entering into mutually supportive activities (Swick & Graves, 1993).

In promoting the empowerment perspective, educators should note that parents play the primary role in identifying and meeting their own needs, with professionals playing a supportive role (Sussell, Carr, & Hartman, 1996). The goal here is to empower parents to act as advocates for themselves as well as for their children. Educators should note, however, that a failure of either educators or parents to display competence may be

due to a failure of the social system to create opportunities for the competencies to be acquired (Perl, 1995). This has implications for how educators work with individuals in both the family and the school systems. Educators should be competent enough to enable parents and those within the family system, as well as professionals and personnel within the school system, to acquire the skills necessary to meet as equal partners in the collaboration process.

Partnerships and Collaboration Skills

Wolfendale (1992) defines partnership as "a working relationship that is characterized by a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect, and the willingness to negotiate. This implies a sharing of information, responsibility, skills, decision-making, and accountability" (p. 14). Parents and educators, working collaboratively, set the stage for a strong parent-professional partnership, because the best interests of the child is the mutual interest and common goal of both parties. Working toward that end, both parents and educators contribute resources (knowledge, skill, and time), that are pooled and used collaboratively.

The partnership is built on loyalty, trust, and honesty, as information is disclosed. The powers of the partners and the locus of decision making are established at the beginning of the collaborative relationship. The educator shares information to assist the family in evaluating different options. While working collaboratively in this process, the family makes the final, informed decisions regarding their child and family (Dunst & Paget, 1991).

Effective partnerships are dependent on interpersonal factors such as willingness to listen, acceptance of individual values, recognition of trust as basic to the spirit of cooperation, and willingness to participate in and accommodate a partnership relationship. Interpersonal skills related to attitudes, beliefs, and specific behaviors that support collaboration also include accurate listening, reflecting feelings and thoughts, positive reframing, and demonstrating positive regard (Friend & Cook, 1996).

Information sharing, rather that information giving by professionals, can enhance collaboration. When educators invite input from parents and families, they demonstrate a willingness to work on defining mutual goals through a reciprocal process of information sharing. Avoiding the use of educational jargon, developing appropriate strategies that are personalized, and reinforcing the value of parental input by using their suggestions whenever possible, all serve to encourage parental involvement (Sileo, Sileo, & Prater, 1996). A combination of communication techniques throughout the process should include open questions, clarification, and summarization, in an exchange that demonstrates respect between families and school personnel (Cronin, Slade, Betchel, & Anderson, 1992; Ryndak, Downing, Morrison, & Williams, 1996). These communication skills, in addition to a sense of shared responsibility, may help relieve some of the stress experienced when families feel that their options are limited and may question and challenge professionals.

In summary, the most effective interactive style between educators and families involves building a mutually trusting relationship with an honest exchange of information and perspectives, demonstrating readiness to incorporate different viewpoints. This may necessitate the training of school personnel in those communication and interpersonal

skills identified, particularly those of listening, clarifying, summarizing, and reframing, since these are necessary in building a mutually trusting relationship. Fiedler (1991) noted that partnerships between educators and families enable the partners to attain a mutually agreed upon goal by empowering them to act in the best interest of the child. Working in respectful partnerships with parents and families, educators can model effective communication and interpersonal skills that facilitate the process. This would also serve to enable parents and families to develop those skills that will empower them to collaborate in more effective home-school partnerships.

Parental Involvement in the Collaboration Process

The terms parents and families will be used interchangeably throughout the remainder of this text. While the emphasis throughout this paper is on developing more collaborative home-school partnerships, it is recognized that the parents represent the family at meetings, particularly when working with young children with special needs. It is for the purpose of economy, rather than exclusion, that the term parent will be used.

Despite evidence in the literature that acknowledges that parents and family members are valuable team members who provide insight as well as information (Danyluk, 1996; Doll & Bolger, 1991; Dunst & Paget, 1991), with their presence on planning teams promoted in policy, they are not always considered mutual partners in the educational decision making process (Simpson, 1990). Collaboration is the delivery system that is consistent with parents and professionals forming working partnerships that empower families (Fine, 1991). Respectful partnerships result when professionals

bring communication and problem solving skills into working relationships with families. Families can then benefit from an increased sense of efficacy through mutual problem solving and planning. True collaboration has not yet been realized, however, despite the fact that family and professional relationships have been encouraged in the field of special education (Ryndak, Downing, Morrison, & Williams, 1996; Sileo, Sileo, & Prater, 1996). Educators must examine their role in the process if they are to remedy this lack of collaboration in home-school relationships.

Collaboration is a process that is voluntary, requires parity among participants, is based on mutual goals, depends on shared responsibility for participation and decision making, and involves individuals who share resources and share accountability for outcomes (Friend & Cook, 1996). One of the main thrusts in collaborative home-school partnerships is engaging both systems, the family and the school, in an advocacy role throughout the planning process (Fiedler,1991). Fiedler defined advocacy as "the representation of rights and interests of oneself or others in an effort to bring about change and to eliminate barriers to meeting identified needs" (p. 319). While advocacy is a role that should be shared by both parents and professionals, it may be perceived by professionals as adversarial if it is not properly understood. Fiedler noted that special education personnel have historically avoided advocacy because of insufficient training. In ensuring an appropriate education for children with special needs, "it is the responsibility of professionals themselves to serve as advocates for exceptional children and it is the professionals' obligation to prepare parents adequately to fulfill their advocacy role" (p. 319). Fiedler maintained that educators fulfill their advocacy role by demonstrating an ability to recognize the child's needs, an ability to work with others to

plan to meet those needs, and assertiveness in using and accessing information and resources in carrying out a program plan. By establishing collaborative relationships with parents and families through closer communication between the family and the school, educators can advance the advocacy roles of both partners in working to meet the special needs of the children they serve.

Collaboration in the Program Planning Process

The Special Education Policy Manual (Department of Education,1992) for the province of Newfoundland and Labrador outlines the policy and procedures for providing special services to students with special needs. The format is repeated in subsequent documents distributed by the Department of Education's Student Support Services Division (1996). As noted in these Special Education policy documents, parental involvement is an integral part of each stage of the program planning process. Parental involvement includes contributing to the profile of student's strengths and needs, participating in the assessment process, identifying goals in the program planning process, and ensuring that the program plan is carried out. Parents are involved as part of the team, which also includes individuals from various disciplines working with the child (e.g., speech-language therapist, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, social worker, and health care worker).

Within the latest guidelines released by the Department of Education (1996) calling for the development of an Individual Support Services Plan, many children with special needs will have been identified prior to school entry. Some parents may already

be familiar with the process and may even be the case managers of the team. For some parents, however, the school system may be their first exposure to the whole planning team process. The purpose of the planning meeting is for all service providers, together with parents, to collaborate in support services planning to meet the needs of the child. The process may be a new one for some educators, particularly those with little or no special education training. For these individuals, while Department of Education documents reference collaborative team planning, there is no guidance on how to establish partnerships with parents and families. Consequently, the degree and the quality of involvement appears to be left to the discretion of the individuals on each school team, and might translate into merely the presence of parents at meetings and parent signatures on documents required yearly as proof of having participated in the process. Canning (1996), in her review of special education services to students in the province, calls for greater accountability to parents in terms of "outlining policy, services, procedures, and the role parents can play in the development of education plans for their special needs children" (p. 29). A model for parent involvement in the process is needed.

Through experience, many professionals involved in the delivery of special services come to recognize that parents are their strongest allies, in both obtaining and supporting services for children with special needs. Educators should work to engage parents in the program planning process, encouraging a range of parent participation that meets the needs and interests of each family. Educators must recognize that the collaborative process is an evolving one that must accommodate the needs of the family at various developmental cycles.

A collaborative model for parental involvement, developed by Fine (1991), incorporates the idea of empowerment through the fostering of respectful partnerships with parents. Fine outlined four objectives of a collaborative model of parent involvement. These objectives involve including parents in decision making regarding their child, educating parents for participation in the decision making process, assisting parents with specific issues so that they are better able to cope and to participate in the process, and enabling and empowering parents to actively participate in their child's education. The following elaboration of Fine's (1991) model is proposed for use by educators, as a way toward establishing more collaborative partnerships with families.

An Elaborated Collaboration Model for Use in the Program Planning Process

This author proposes the following model as a way to prepare parents and families to participate as equal partners in the program planning team process, so that the integrated support services plan that emerges from the meeting reflects family input and concerns, as well as those of the school. One person from the school's Program Planning Team within the receiving school, prior to the entry of the child to the school system (or upon initial identification of a student with special needs), will be designated as the liaison person for the child and his/her family. This individual may or may not be involved directly in providing instruction to the child, but would maintain the role of a liaison and advocate for the child and the family throughout the period that the child is

enrolled in the school, and throughout the transition process to a new setting. This will enable continuity as the child moves through different teachers. The objectives of the model are as follows:

1. The liaison person would meet with parents to review the Program Planning Team process as specified in the Special Education Policy Manual (1992). This would involve explaining the steps of the process and the roles of the other professionals involved in the team, discussing parents' rights and responsibilities in assuming their role as part of the team. Information about the school, personnel involved in the delivery of special services, as well as services offered within the school and the larger School Board, would be given to parents. Parents would be presented with options for becoming involved in the school (e.g., through parent volunteer programs, parent groups, or other school sponsored parent activities).

2. The liaison person would present the concept of home-school partnerships to parents, emphasizing the need for open communication, sharing ideas, and mutual problem solving. The parent's role in detailing the child's strengths and needs and long term goals, as an equal partner in the child's Program Planning Team, would be explained. Parents would be encouraged to question personnel and to contribute to and challenge points raised in discussion. Parents would also be made aware that, although meeting with professionals as equal partners in the planning process, the final decision about goals and courses of action rests with the parents.

3. The liaison person would assist parents with specific issues involving their child, or themselves in the parenting role. Assistance may include offering parent education programs through the school or community, linking parents with other

agencies, networking with parent support groups, or linking parents with supports in the community. The liaison person would maintain ongoing, regular contact with parents, as follow up, to encourage open, fluid communication between home and school. Ongoing communication is especially important at transition times, when students move from one level to another in the school, from one school to another, or from school to community. At these times, the liaison person involved would support the parents to help ensure a smooth transition of the child and the family to the new setting.

4. The liaison person would encourage parents to advocate for the needs of their child within the school system and within the larger community. Advocacy is an ongoing process while the child is enrolled within the school setting and may be particularly important at transition times, as well as when accessing services within the community. Through ongoing education and support, the family can become empowered to advocate for the needs of their child.

This proposed model is based on Fine's (1991) model, and it can be used to enhance the program planning team process that is currently used in schools in Newfoundland and Labrador. Several functional aspects contribute to making this model collaborative and responsive to the needs of families with children with special needs as they interact with the educational system. The model meets the need for more family involvement in the planning team process. The model is developmental and responsive to the changing needs of families, allowing degrees of involvement according to the level desired by the family as it moves through developmental cycles. It is proactive in encouraging ongoing interaction so that the process is both enabling and empowering for families. It reinforces multiple roles for professionals, including the roles of mediator

(between families and other agencies), and advocate (in supporting the family to obtain services). The model encourages a problem solving focus, and views parents as the primary influence in their child's life. The family focus of this model is recognized by educators who are sensitive to family issues, involvement, and contributions, acknowledging that the professionals, and the family, possess complementary knowledge and skills that cement the relationship as a partnership.

In presenting this elaboration of Fine's model, it must be noted that not all professionals have been trained to work collaboratively with one another (Canning, 1996; Fine, 1991). The concepts of collaboration, empowerment, and advocacy may be new for some educators. School personnel, as well as parents, may need sensitization to or training in, the areas of interpersonal and collaboration skills, as well as skills involved in decision making and problem solving.

The proposed model is designed to incorporate problem solving, decision making and collaboration skills in a modeling and coaching framework. It reflects a recognition that each parent's desire and ability to participate in the process is on a continuum, and that the uniqueness of each family must be recognized and respected while engaging them in the process. The basic philosophy of the proposed model is that successful home-school partnerships involve individuals from two systems working together toward mutually established goals. The parents (from the family system) and school personnel (from the school system), work together in a relationship based on mutual respect, acknowledging strengths, acquiring skills, and engaging in problem solving. It is a process that empowers families to work on behalf of their children.

The model enhances current special education policies that espouse parental involvement and collaborative teaming. It involves support from the school system for parents and families, as well as for the individual student. The model is also an initial response to concerns about a current lack of parental knowledge regarding programming for children with special needs, by keeping families informed and involved in the policies, procedures, and programs in place for their children. It encourages educators and families to work together as mutual supports with issues of empowerment and advocacy. Strong home-school partnerships are particularly important as educators and families engage in program planning processes to best meet the needs of children amidst the restructuring of the delivery of services to students with special needs.

Concluding Comments

The stresses of modern society impact heavily on the two systems which most affect the life of a child, those of the family and the school. Throughout the thirteen years of a child's educational life, the family system and the school system are interacting with each other with varying degrees of intensity. This paper clarifies the roles of educators in working with families to arrive at mutually defined goals through ownership of a collaborative process that, to date, has often been left to chance.

The information presented sensitizes educators to the unique characteristics of families with children with special needs. Consideration of the barriers to parental involvement may assist educators to attend to concerns that may be divisive and inhibiting to the pursuing of more meaningful home-school partnerships. When educators

involve parents in a collaborative role in the program planning process, they develop and foster strong partnerships that benefit the child.

Educators must enact current policy directions calling for more family involvement and supports in program planning for children with special needs. This requires improved communication between home and school. In this paper, educators have been presented with principles for involving parents in proactive partnerships. Terms that may be unfamiliar to educators, enablement, empowerment, and advocacy, have been explained. Implicit in eac+h of these terms is an understanding of a changing dynamic between home and school. In working toward establishing more effective home-school relationships, it is necessary that educators demonstrate mutual respect, and a sense of shared ownership and responsibility while working with parents to enable and empower them to meet the special needs of their children. When educators embrace the challenge to work in more collaborative relationships with families, the home and school systems join in an advocacy role that benefits the child.

Characteristics of partnerships and collaboration were outlined, and an elaboration of Fine's (1991) model for more effective home-school collaboration was presented. The proposed model can be incorporated into the current program planning process in use in schools, and can be further adapted to meet the unique interfaces between each family and each school involved in the process. The model proposed for collaboration between home and school involves parents as equal partners in the program planning process, following policy guidelines promoting more participation by parents. Educators can begin now to commit to the collaborative process, and to work to enact it, by practicing skills and enacting principles for more collaborative partnerships, as presented within this

paper. By recognizing that stronger partnerships between home and school result in better service delivery for children with special needs, educators can help to ensure that families are empowered to continue to work for better services for their children long after they have left the school system.

References

Berger, E. H. (1987). Parents as partners in education: The school and home working together.(3rd edition). Toronto, OT: Merrill.

Canning, P. (1996). Special matters: The report of the review of special education. St. John's' NF: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Cobb, H., & Reeve, R. (1991). Counseling approaches with parents and families. In Fine, M. (Ed.), Collaboration with Parents of Exceptional Children (pp.129-143). Brandon, VT: Clinical Psychology.

Cronin, M., Slade, D., Bechtel, C., & Anderson, P. (1992). Home-school partnerships: A cooperative approach to intervention. Intervention in School and Clinic, 27, 286-292.

Danyluk, J. (1996). Parents as partners: From theory to practice. The Alberta Counsellor, 22, 11-13.

Department of Education (1992). Special education policy manual. St. John's, NF: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Department of Education, Division of Student Support Services (1996). Programming for individual needs: Prereferral intervention. St. John's, NF: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Department of Education, Division of Student Support Services (1996). Individual Support Service Plans. St. John's, NF: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Doll, B., & Bolger, M.W. (1991). The family with a young developmentally disabled child. In M. Fine (Ed.), Collaboration with Parents of Exceptional Children (pp. 183-201). Brandon, VT: Clinical Psychology.

Dunst, C., & Paget, K. (1991). Parent-professional partnerships and family empowerment. In M. Fine (Ed.), Collaboration with Parents of Exceptional Children (pp. 25-49). Brandon, VT: Clinical Psychology.

Dunst, C., & Trivette, C. (1987). Enabling and empowering families: Conceptual and intervention issues. School Psychology Review, 16, 443-456.

Edwards, D., & Foster, M. (1995). Uniting the family and school systems: A process of empowering the school counselor. The School Counselor, 42, 277-282.

Elksnin, L., & Elksnin, N. (1989). Collaborative consultation: Improving parent-teacher communication. Academic Therapy, 24, 261-269.

Elksnin, L., & Elksnin, N. (1991). Helping parents solve problems at home and school through parent training. Intervention in School and Clinic, 26, 230-245.

Fiedler, C. (1991). Preparing parents to participate: Advocacy and education. In M. Fine (Ed.), Collaboration with Parents of Exceptional Children (pp. 313-333). Brandon, VT: Clinical Psychology.

Fine, M. (1991). A collaboration model for parent school involvement. In M. Fine (Ed.), Collaboration with Parents of Exceptional Children (pp. 1-24). Brandon, VT: Clinical Psychology.

Fine, M., & Gardner, P. (1994). Counseling and education services for families: An empowerment perspective. Elementary School Guidance & Counseling, 26, 33-43.

Friend, M., & Cook, L. (1996). Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals. New York: Longman.

Hadadian, A. (1996). Americans with disabilities act: Empowering individual and families of children with disabilities. International Journal of Special Education, 11, 21-24.

Krehbiel, R., & Kroth, R. (1991). Communicating with families of children with disabilities or chronic illness. In M. Fine (Ed.), Collaboration with Parents of Exceptional Children (pp. 103-128). Brandon, VT: Clinical Psychology.

Lloyd, S. (1996). Unexpected findings in interviews with parents of children with disabilities. B.C. Journal of Special Education, 19(2/3), 46-54.

Paget, K. (1991). Proactive family-school partnerships in early intervention. In M. Fine & C. Carlson (Eds.), The Handbook of Family-School Intervention (pp. 119-133). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Perl, J. (1995). Improving relationship skills for parent conferences. Teaching Exceptional Children, 28(2), 29-31.

Prout, H. T., & Prout, S.M. (1991). The family with a mentally retarded child. In M. Fine (Ed.), Collaboration with Parents of Exceptional Children (pp. 165-182). Brandon, VT: Clinical Psychology.

Royster, A., & McLaughlin, T. (1996). Parent partnerships in special education: Purposes, models and barriers. B.C. Journal of Special Education, 20(2), 24-33.

Folio Paper Three

Interagency Collaboration in Transition Planning

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Interagency Collaboration in Transition Planning

Abstract.....i

Introduction.....1

Rationale for Interagency Collaboration.....2

School Linked Services Integration.....5

Skills Necessary for Interagency Collaboration.....7

Barriers to Effective Interagency Collaboration.....10

Interagency Collaboration in Transition Planning.....12

Concluding Comments.....18

References.....21

Abstract

The Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education (1996) promotes a collaborative decision making process to be used by personnel from different agencies, for more comprehensive service delivery. An integrated services management approach involves coordination of the agencies that address the diverse requirements of children and youth with special needs. This paper presents educators with a background of information about service coordination and interagency collaboration. The role of the educator in interagency collaboration is examined within the context of current government policy documents coordinating multiple services for children and youth with special needs. Educators are presented with an example of interagency planning in addressing the transition of students with special needs from school to adult community living. This paper presents educators with information and direction for the interpretation and execution of collaborative practices, as outlined in government policy documents.

Introduction

A draft document, Model for the Coordination of Services to Children and Youth with Special Needs in Newfoundland and Labrador, was released by the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education (1996), in response to government departments' concerns about comprehensive service delivery to young people in this province. The focus of the document is on service coordination when more than one agency is involved in providing services to children and youth. Service coordination is particularly necessary when addressing the many and diverse requirements of children and youth with special needs. The proposed model emphasizes the collaborative nature of the decision making process used by teams composed of personnel from different agencies, employing an integrated service management approach. This policy change impacts directly on educators because they are reaching out to other agencies to avail of multiple services in order to address the needs of their students.

This paper presents educators with a background of information about coordination of services for children and youth, to help educators clarify their role in interagency collaboration within the context of current government initiatives. Educators will already be familiar with the principles and skills of collaboration, and collaborative partnerships between the family and school systems, presented in the first two papers in this folio. This paper builds on this base and provides information on skills needed for interagency collaboration, as well as barriers to the process, so that educators can more effectively enact policy changes in the delivery of services to their students. The

educator's role in interagency collaboration will be presented in an example of transition planning for students with special needs, illustrating school, family, and community involvement in interagency collaboration.

Rationale for Interagency Collaboration

In order to adapt to new levels of interdependency, complexity, and uncertainty in today's society and into the future, interagency collaboration is necessary. Recognizing the interdependence of different systems at work in the life of a child has implications for how these systems work together to meet the needs of the individual child. The strategic plan proposed by The Select Committee on Childrens' Interests (1996) in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador proposed the integration and coordination of government services affecting children, youth, and their families. The services to be coordinated would be those offered by the Departments of Health, Social Services, Education, and Justice, and would reflect a move from a crisis-oriented to a prevention-oriented social policy stance. The model for the coordination of services evolved from this strategic plan, and this new policy implies changes in how educators relate to professionals in other agencies. Educational change, however, does not automatically occur as a result of policy adoption. As Wisniewski and Alper (1994) pointed out, "policies that affect schools serve as a catalyst for change...collaborative working relationships among parents, teachers, and others are essential and the success for these strategies will depend upon the collaborative relationships formed between school and community" (p.5). Educators, then, must take a proactive stance by preparing themselves to meet with professionals

from other agencies as equal partners in the collaboration process. Educators must be prepared to assume their expanded role, involving interactions with all agencies that provide services to the student and the family.

The complex problems faced by our children and youth and their families, in today's society are multicausal in nature, requiring services from more than one established agency or program (Keys & Bemak, 1997; Sullivan & Sugarman, 1996). The approach needed to address the problems requires that systems of care no longer remain isolated from each other, each seeking its own solution to the problems. Increasingly, educators comment that they assume multiple roles in schools, including parent, social worker, and counselor. The emphasis on interagency collaboration addresses this concern, recognizing that no one institution can take full responsibility for meeting the full range of developmental needs (physical, emotional, social, and academic) of the clients each serves (Downing, Pierce, & Woodruff, 1993). Since children grow and develop within a developmental system, "it is the system that needs to be engaged as part of the problem-solving process" (Keys & Bemak, 1997, p. 257).

A coordinated network is more time efficient than traditional approaches. Since assistance performed in isolation is limited to the resources of the helper and the setting, recruiting support from other agencies can increase the availability and effectiveness of help in the life of a client, while reducing stress on any one helping professional. Most importantly, services integration offers the potential to address problems caused by fragmentation of different services (Downing, Pierce, & Woodruff, 1993; Skirtic & Sailor, 1996).

Schools can no longer operate in isolation from parents or from the communities in which their students live. The hope of improved quality of care and better use of financial resources through a more coordinated network of service delivery has resulted in schools reaching out to communities and collaborative linking with other services. This is part of a "movement currently underway that seeks to create more responsive educational and human service delivery systems ... bringing a change between schools and community agencies" (Hobbs & Collison, 1995, p. 58).

In Newfoundland and Labrador, restructuring and reform of the educational system is ongoing. The government is seeking ways to streamline services and to conserve resources amidst rising financial pressures on institutions and individuals, and mounting stresses on families in today's society. Less money is available to meet these increasingly diverse and complex needs. The thrust for more coordinated services for children and youth in this province is concurrent with the move to create more responsive models of service delivery in schools and in social institutions. Since the need to form collaborative working relationships with multiple agencies is clearly articulated in government documents (Department of Education, 1996), as well as in the literature addressing the need for more effective services for individuals with special needs (Keys & Bemak, 1997; Hobbs & Collison, 1995; Sullivan & Sugarman, 1996), it is incumbent on educators to prepare themselves with the skills necessary to meet the challenges of interagency collaboration.

School-Linked Services Integration

Sullivan and Sugarman (1996) noted that the school-linked services initiative is part of a larger movement for more integration of education, health, and social services for children. They stated that "integration does not typically mean merger of these service systems, but rather increased collaboration among them - that is, a partnership in which a number of service agencies work towards a common set of goals" (p. 285). A school-linked services approach necessitates collaboration among educators, and professionals from social services, health, and any other agency involved in the life of the child. While the child or youth is of school age, educators usually are the central participants in planning and overseeing this collaborative effort. The school serves as the coordinator of personnel which are located at the school or within the community. School personnel are involved in identifying children who need services, but they are not typically the providers of all the services.

The primary goal of school-linked services has been to ensure that children and youth, and their families, particularly those with special needs or are at risk, have coordinated access to services from health, mental health, social services, and other human services agencies and programs, in a seamless web (Amato, 1996; Sullivan & Sugarman, 1996). This approach has gained popularity in recent years in response to the crisis created by dramatic changes in society, whereby the adequacy of social institutions to respond to crisis in public health, education, and social welfare was called into question. This movement resembled those found in school restructuring efforts (Skrtic & Sailor, 1996). Because most models have only been in existence since the early 1990's,

and are still evolving, evaluation data on working models is still scarce. One of the consistent findings reported to date, however, is that parents are empowered by this integrated system of care that involves them as important participants in creating system services structures (Skrtic & Sailor, 1996). Rather than being agency focused, the services integration movement seeks to make the services family focused and community managed. Skrtic and Sailor noted that, because the school is the primary agency involved in the lives of children, school-linked services with outside agencies "emerged from the recognition that these services systems needed to become more user friendly to counter alienation and further deterioration of the status of children" (p. 277).

The Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education (1996) refers to an integrated service management approach, and defines this as one that "coordinates the actions/supports of all service providers, and allows for coordination of various services into a common and cohesive program plan for the child and family" (p.2). The proposed model for the coordination of services emphasizes a holistic rather than a splintered approach to service delivery, involving professionals who complement the role of families. Families are recognized as having the leadership role as team members in the implementation of the program plan. The emphasis is on a collaborative decision making process at the community level, to provide a coordinated, consistent, and efficient team approach, and to sustain continuity of services to meet individual needs. Within the Department of Education's (1996) document, it is noted that this approach "facilitates and maximizes an efficient use of the existing limited resources " (p.3). Educators must recognize that they must engage in interagency collaboration in order to access the limited resources that must be shared among other agencies attempting to meet the needs

of the child.

Participation of professionals from various community agencies in program planning is not a new concept for educators involved in the delivery of special services to students in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, since this approach has been mandated in the Special Education Policy Manual (1992). New policy documents (Department of Education, 1996) involving the coordination of all government departments in service delivery to at risk students call for educators to collaborate with professionals representing the government services of health, social services, and justice, with shared responsibility for developing and implementing an integrated services plan. Educators must be familiar with the skills they will require to collaborate with other agencies, because the effort and responsibility for developing the plan will be shared among professionals from several different agencies, rather than being simply incorporated into a program plan that is developed and overseen by educators alone.

Skills Necessary for Interagency Collaboration

Interagency collaboration will require that educators work with representatives from different organizations with their own infrastructures, policies, guidelines, and funding arrangements. The skills necessary to work effectively in this environment require careful consideration by educators. Mutuality and reciprocity are the two defining characteristics of all collaborative working relationships (Friend & Cook, 1996). The collaborative process is a developmental one, and mutual respect during the learning process and throughout the working arrangements is critical to the effectiveness

of interagency collaboration. Joint efforts at sharing responsibilities and decisions emerge from a mutual determination of goals. Traditionally, educators have invited input from professionals from various agencies at program planning team meetings to augment services for their students with special needs. Educators will now be working with professionals from various departments to mutually define goals when developing support services plans. Reciprocity is required in interagency collaboration because joint, rather than unilateral, decision making requires expanded information sharing among various agencies. It is necessary to determine the kinds of information to be shared, and the audience with whom it is shared. Procedures to protect rights to privacy while information sharing are also required (Hobbs & Collison, 1995), and educators must be aware of information sharing protocols when working with professionals from various agencies.

Communication skills, especially those of being clear and concrete, are particularly critical when working across organizations. Educators must note that negotiation skills are crucial, since it is often necessary to negotiate the use of personnel, time, funds, facilities, materials, and resources with several other agencies. Coordination among agencies is a particularly difficult task when fiscal restraints limit the resources available and goals are to be mutually determined and prioritized in order to avail of those shared, limited resources.

Professional linking of services requires knowledge about community human services systems and information on their policies, procedures, and programs. This is a major challenge, particularly when systems of care are being restructured, as in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The consolidation of school boards and

restructuring of schools, the formation of the Health Care Corporation with consolidation of services provided to children and youth, in addition to the blending of some health and child welfare services into the Department of Community Health and Human Services, are the most recent examples of massive restructuring of government agencies in this province, as an attempt is made to coordinate and streamline services. Educators must now be familiar with the policies and procedures within their own restructured organization, as well as those in recently reorganized departments (health and social services), in order to be familiar with the scope of services offered by these agencies. Educators must be able to communicate clearly the policies and procedures of their own organization, and must be aware that information sharing with professionals from other agencies may require becoming familiar with different "language systems" (Skrtic & Sailor, 1996, p. 278).

Rothman (1994) pointed out that effective linking of services is possible only through a lead agency with control of resources and legal sanctions. Authority to command resources and responsibility are variables influencing the quality and character of interagency linkages. Educators must recognize that they will most probably be working in collaborative relationships with other professionals who are similarly bound by their level of authority and responsibility to assign resources, since there is currently no designated single lead agency to assign resources.

In summary, the essential skills required for effective interagency collaboration include trust, openness, reciprocity, and flexibility, to foster clear and open communication between professionals. Strong communication skills are necessary for a clear understanding of services needed and services available and for a match between

these. It is also necessary that educators have "a basic understanding of the expertise, orientation, terminology, and potential role of the other professionals on the collaborating team" (Geroski, Rodgers & Breen, 1997, p. 231).

Barriers to Effective Interagency Collaboration

The process of interagency collaboration may be an unfamiliar process for many. . Educators should be aware of some factors that may impede effective collaboration efforts, so that they can work to avoid or to overcome these barriers. Lack of knowledge about the client is one major barrier to effective collaboration with service agencies (Rothman, 1994). The practice of effective linking begins with a clear understanding of the needs of the client. Professionals participating in the process should be very aware of their individual roles within their own organizations, and the nature of the relationship of their organization with external service agencies, in meeting client needs. Educators must be prepared to articulate their role when they enter into discussions with outside agencies. A lack of understanding of client needs might impede the ability to effectively negotiate arrangements with other agencies.

Informal resistance from agency personnel impedes effective collaboration among agencies. Although training and practice in problem solving skills enhance the ability of team members to participate more effectively in interdisciplinary teams, most preservice preparation continues to be unidisciplinary (Korinek & McLaughlin, 1996). A lack of interdisciplinary training, and few opportunities for networking, may also inhibit the interagency collaboration process, as educators may be unfamiliar with the services

offered by various agencies also involved in providing services to students with special needs.

Obstacles may include different eligibility requirements, confidentiality requirements, accounting procedures, and different professional certification standards (Sullivan & Sugarman, 1996). These may affect the tone of relationships among different organizations. Open communication may not have previously existed between organizations when there are few informal linkages among members of different agencies. A prior history of poor relationships among different organizations can also be a deterrent, particularly when there are insufficient resources to support coordination efforts. This can result in rivalry for position and funding among organizations, and may severely impede collaborative working relationships. Those participating in the collaborative process with other agencies must remain cognizant of the fact that the nature and extent of the partnership may be determined partly by factors beyond the control of each participant (Friend & Cook, 1996). Organizational constraints may interfere with, and even frustrate, the pursuit of services. Because each of the agencies must be brought together, with their expertise and resources synthesized, the task of coordination of services is a complex one.

An awareness of some of the obstacles that may hinder the collaboration process with outside agencies may provide educators with some direction for further skill development. The educator's knowledge base about other community agencies may be expanded by attending workshops or courses offered by other agencies to become more familiar with their procedures, establishing informal linkages through networking, or

reading professional journals from other disciplines, to learn more about current issues being addressed by other agencies.

Interagency Collaboration in Transition Planning

The Model for the Coordination of Services to Children and Youth with Special Needs in Newfoundland and Labrador (Department of Education, 1996) focuses on the time span from birth through the student years (21 years of age). Although the provincial draft policy promotes coordination of services to children and youth at risk for that time period, the document fails to specifically address the critical transition from school to independent community living. The school to independent community living transition is a major one for students with special needs. Both the student, and the student's family, may experience an abrupt cutoff of resources and supports at this crucial period, particularly in the absence of mandated guidance or support services that have been traditionally offered through the school system. Transition planning, according to the policy contained with the Department of Education's document Using Our Strengths: Programming for Individual Needs (1992), should begin before the student's 16th birthday. The services provided through an integrated services management approach, as identified by the Department of Education (1996) in its document Individual Support Service Plans, emphasizes the involvement of education, social services, health, and justice in program planning for the student. It seems evident, therefore, that transition planning should be an integral part of the student's life long before he/she exits the educational system. Educators, then, would be responsible for coordinating the team to

plan for the transition of the student from the educational institution to independent community living.

The document outlining the coordination of services offers no specific outline for a planned transition from school to adult community living for the population of students with special needs. This lack of planning causes concern for families of these students. Whitney-Thomas and Hanley-Maxwell (1996) noted that "parents of students with disabilities face the transition from school to adult services with the ever present concern that necessary support services may not be available" (p.75). A national survey of employment outcomes of high school graduates with disabilities, in the United States, identified vocational and transitional planning services as the least provided by schools and/or service agencies, while also identifying these as the most required services (Burkhead & Wilson, 1995). The Report of the Task Force on Transition into Employment to the Canadian Labour Force Development Board (1994), quoting Statistics Canada, reported that people with disabilities constituted 7% of the population and are among the most disadvantaged economically in Canadian society. This statistic further reinforces the need for educators to engage in interagency collaboration to address service needs for students preparing for transition from school to independent community living.

Repetto and Correa (1996) noted the role of the primary service provider as one who initiates a carefully planned transition process for each student moving to a new program, establishing a documented multiagency service plan that promotes collaboration with multiple community service agencies. The common elements in most transition models include family, school, and agency involvement, linkages with post school

services, and planning for the future for desired post school outcomes in the areas of residential, employment, and community activities.

The components for transition plans must be outcome oriented, covering the areas of adult living and community experience, as well as stating participating agency responsibilities and linkages. Repetto and Correa (1996) contended that building strong interagency partnerships are the key to successful transitions for students. As the primary service providers during the ages of 5 through 21, educators must take responsibility for building those strong partnerships with community service agencies, not only during the Individual Support Service Plan team meetings, as directed in Department of Education (1992; 1996) policy guidelines, but through meaningful linkages with professionals from various disciplines that provide services to the student.

As early as 1987, Johnson, Bruininks, and Thurlow noted that improvement in transition services is dependent on effective management of service planning and services coordination. The initiatives for increasing interagency collaboration, according to these authors, are based on jointly authored policy statements between offices of special education, community health, vocational education, and vocational rehabilitation, in the form of mandates to establish interagency agreements. In her review of special education services in this province, Canning (1996) called for the development of a "collaboration protocol which will make it more likely that the efforts of all parties will more effectively meet the needs of children" (p. 295). In the absence of jointly authored policy statements, a protocol would provide educators with a framework for documenting interagency collaboration efforts, particularly as they affect transition planning. The integrated services support plan, which requires input from families and all agencies involved in

setting goals and outlining services, appears to be an initial response to the need for this documentation. Educators engaging in effective interagency collaboration can help to promote a documented plan which addresses all the needs of their students as they transition from the school to adult community living.

To facilitate the coordination between schools and adult service agencies, educators must involve those agencies in participating as members of the transition team early in the student's high school placement. This team would then take the lead in developing a plan and identifying supports necessary to ensure access to appropriate services following school leaving. The educational system and each adult service agency involved need to establish a cooperative information system for tracking students as they move from school to adult life (Hardman & McDonnell, 1987).

Although written a decade ago, Stodden and Boone (1987) offer guidelines for transition planning that would enhance the framework presented in the current Model for the Coordination of Services to Children and Youth in Newfoundland and Labrador (Department of Education, 1996), particularly as it relates to transition planning. Stodden and Boone noted that cooperative planning for transition should clearly outline the responsibilities of each service agency for each step of the transition process. In addition, linkage resources and receiving environments in the community must also be identified. Interagency collaboration requires agreement and commitment of participating planners on major goals of the transition plan.

In summary, as the service agency most involved in the life of a child, the education system must be prepared to be the lead agency in the coordination of services to its students, particularly when these students are preparing to transition from school

life to adult community living. For the population of students with special needs, this would necessitate involving the Department of Human Resources and Employment, to plan for independent living arrangements (e.g., apartment living, group home), assessment of job readiness skills, and training for employment. The Department of Health and Community Services may need to be involved to address physical or emotional needs, as well as for supporting a healthy lifestyle. The receiving community would become involved in exploring recreational and community services, and in designing a plan to assist the individual to access these, thus addressing needs in the areas of social and emotional development. Depending on the status of the individual student, interventions from the Department of Justice may be required to address individual post school needs.

Because planning for the school to community life transition is to be started by age 16, these agencies would be actively involved while the individual youth is still in school. As the primary provider of services at this time, it is incumbent on educators to initiate and maintain effective collaborations with those agencies noted above, in order to devise a transition plan for each student who requires these services. Long term planning requires that the skills deemed necessary for an effective transition are being addressed long before the student exits the educational institution. Students need to be prepared to take up their roles in new environments, apart from the educational institution which has been, until this point, the main agency involved in their lives.

The Department of Education (1996) guidelines offer a framework for collaboration among agencies, in the form of Individual Support Services Plans, and a philosophy that promotes interagency collaboration. This document, however, does not

explain in any detail how this collaboration is to take place, nor does it propose any format for setting the groundwork for training in collaboration skills that are required both intra and interagency. Within the proposed plan for providing services to at risk children and youth, the greater portion of the services offered involve the educational system as the primary agency in a child's program planning process. Critical points in the planning process are transition periods. The school to adult community living transition is the last but most lasting (in terms of effect), transition period within the educational system. Educators must then give more attention to long range planning to address the student's individual needs and to become more involved in interagency planning during this critical period.

Early planning would reflect a prevention oriented approach, which is consistent with the policy outlining the coordination of services to youth in this province. This transition should be given the most forethought and planning, in terms of personnel and resources, follow through and accountability. The degree to which the student with special needs successfully transitions to the community is dependent on the degree of collaboration among various agencies involved in preparing both the student, and the community, for the transition. Educators, in their role as primary service providers as the lead agency involved in the planning, must be prepared to take the responsibility for preparing themselves with the skills necessary for effective interagency collaboration.

Concluding Comments

Children and youth today present with complex needs that require a multifaceted response involving expertise of individuals from several disciplines. This necessitates interagency collaboration and implicates new working relationships between educators and professionals involved in other agencies in creating more responsive service delivery systems.

Within the past two years, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has issued reports that call for collaboration among agencies that serve children and youth in this province. The focus of government initiatives emphasizes a shift from a crisis-oriented to a prevention-oriented social perspective through a coordinated network of services that starts early in the life of a child with special needs. In working to meet the needs of at risk children and their families in a holistic way, interagency collaboration is based on the premise that each system at work in the life of a child has the potential to strengthen and support both the individual and his/her family. In strengthening the natural supports within the community, the individual, family, and the community itself become empowered by planning for and meeting the needs of its members. Educators involved in this process, then, have the opportunity to affect not only the child and family, but the entire community, through their participation in interagency collaboration.

Because interagency collaboration means joint, rather than unilateral planning, problem solving, and decision making, educators must implement strong communication and interpersonal skills. Educators must be well versed in their own agency's philosophy, policies, and procedures, because they must be prepared to articulate and enact these

when engaging in interagency collaboration. Differences in philosophical orientations and practices among agencies involved in support services planning necessitate that educators learn about the policies and procedures of other service agencies in order to engage in collaborative working relationships with them.

While working to develop the skills required for effective interagency collaboration, educators must note, as well, the barriers to that process. Educators can then work to overcome these barriers in order to ensure that their students will avail of the best possible services from various agencies. Establishing informal linkages with outside service agencies, becoming knowledgeable about policies and strategies used by other service agencies, and pursuing interdisciplinary training through courses and workshops, are all areas that educators can initiate and pursue independently. Interagency inservice sessions for professionals involved with school aged students with special needs might be one way of educating participants about the policies and procedures of other agencies. A jointly authored handbook, outlining services provided for the school aged child with special needs, might be produced by the Newfoundland and Labrador Departments of Health and Community Services, Human Resources and Employment, Education, and Justice, so that individuals involved in program planning could become familiar with resources available from these departments.

Collaboration transcends the professional boundaries of organizational structures within our society. A commitment by educators to engage in interagency collaboration involves a commitment of will and effort to practice and refine skills inherent in the collaborative process. Because provincial government documents clearly articulate that the coordination of services to children and youth in the province of Newfoundland and

Labrador will necessitate interagency collaboration, all educators, particularly those involved in the delivery of special services, will be required to participate in this process. Educators must begin now to prepare to assume their roles in the interagency collaboration process if they are to meet with professionals from other service agencies as equal partners. As presented in the example of transition planning, effective interagency collaboration impacts on the student, the family, and the community. When educators commit the time, will, and personal resources to the process of developing skills for effective interagency collaboration, their efforts can result in an improved quality of life for their individual students and the whole community.

References

Amato, C. (1996). Freedom elementary school and its community: An approach to school-linked service integration. Remedial and Special Education, 17, 303-319.

Burkhead, E., & Wilson, L. (1995). The family as a developmental system: Impact on the Career development of individuals with disabilities. Journal of Career Development, 21, 187-199.

Canning, P. (1996). Special matters: The report of the review of special education. St. John's, NF: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Department of Education. (1992). Special education policy manual. St. John's, NF: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Department of Education. (1992). Using our strengths: Programming for individual needs. St. John's, NF: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Department of Education. (1996). Individual support service plans. St. John's, NF: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Department of Education. (1996). Model for the coordination of services for children and youth with special needs (draft document). St. John's: NF: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Downing, J., Pierce, K., & Woodruff, P. (1993). A community network for helping families. The School Counselor, 41, 102-108.

Friend, M., & Cook, L, (1996). Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals, second edition. New York: Longman.

Geroski, A., Rodgers, K., & Breen, D. (1997). Using the DSM-IV to enhance collaboration among school counselors, clinical counselors, and primary care physicians. Journal of Counseling and Development, 75, 231-239.

Hardman, M., & McDonnell, J. (1987). Implementing federal transition initiatives for youths with severe handicaps: The Utah community based transition project. Exceptional Children, 53, 493-498.

Hobbs, B., & Collison, B. (1995). School-community collaboration: Implications for the school counselor. The School Counselor, 43, 58-65.

Johnson, D., Bruininks, R., & Thurlow, M. (1987). Meeting the challenge of transition services planning through improved interagency cooperation. Exceptional Children, 53, 522-530.

Keys, S., & Bemak, F. (1997). School-family-community linked services: A school counseling role for changing times. The School Counselor, 44, 255-263.

Korinek, L., & McLaughlin, V. (1996). Preservice preparation for interdisciplinary collaboration: The intervention assistance teaming project. Contemporary Education, 68, 41-44.

Repetto, J., & Correa, V. (1996). Expanding views on transition. Exceptional Children, 62, 551-563.

Report of the Task Force on Transition into Employment to the Canadian Labour Force. (1994). Putting the pieces together: Toward a coherent transition system for Canada's labour force. Ottawa, OT: Canadian Labour Force Development Board.

Rothman, J. (1994). Practice with highly vulnerable clients: Case management and community-based service. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Select Committee on Childrens' Interests, House of Assembly. (1996). Listening and caring: A plan for child, youth, and community empowerment. St. John's, NF: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Skrtic, T., & Sailor, W. (1996). School-linked services integration: Crisis and opportunity in the transition to postmodern society. Remedial and Special Education, 17, 271-283.

Stodden, R., & Boone, R. (1987). Assessing transition services for handicapped youth: A cooperative interagency approach. Exceptional Children, 53, 537-545.

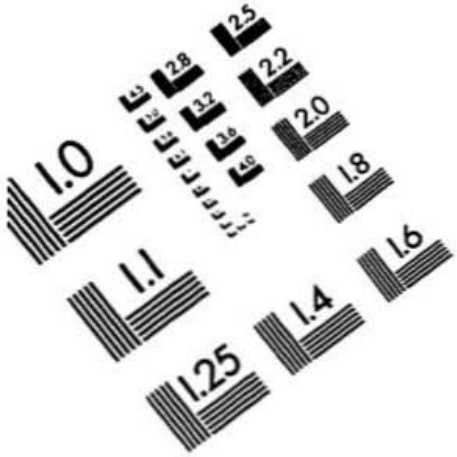
Sullivan, C., & Sugarman, J. (1996). State policies affecting school-linked integrated services. Remedial and Special Education, 17, 284-292.

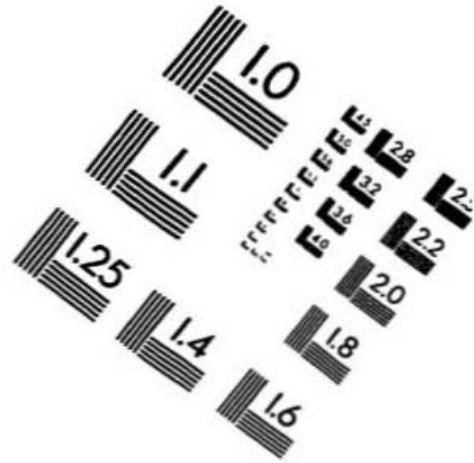
Szymanski, E. (1994). Transition: Life span and life-space considerations for empowerment. Exceptional Children, 60, 402-410.

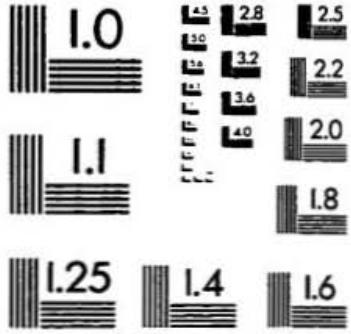
Whitney-Thomas, J., & Hanley-Maxwell, C. (1996). Packing the parachute: Parent experiences as their children prepare to leave high school. Exceptional Children, 63, 75-87.

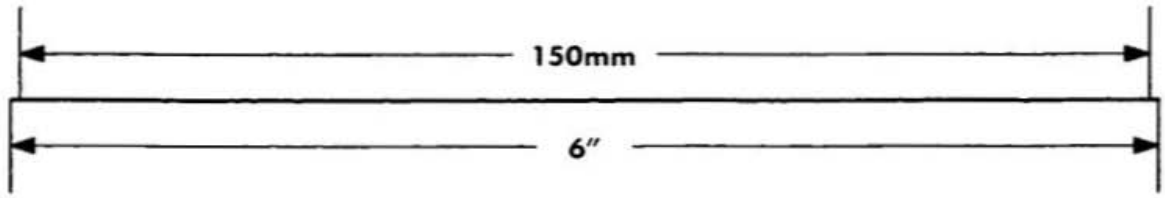
Wisniewski, L., & Alper, S. (1994). Including students with severe disabilities in general education settings: Guidelines for change. Remedial and Special Education, 15, 4-13.

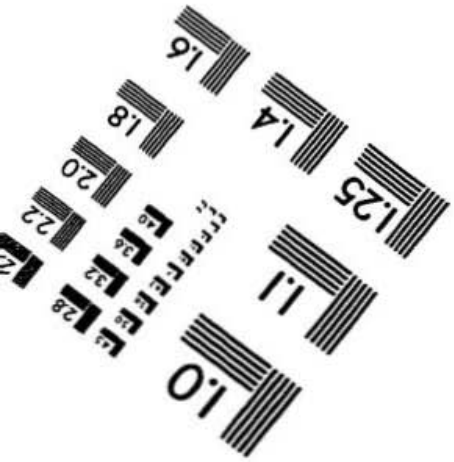
IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (QA-3)











APPLIED IMAGE, Inc
1653 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14609 USA
Phone: 716/482-0300
Fax: 716/288-5989