Collaboration between General Education Teachers and Related Service Providers

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Abstract

Inclusion for students with disabilities into the general education classroom has grown exponentially over the last decade. With legislation, such as, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and The Individuals with Disabilities Educational Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 schools are moving towards integrating their classrooms more than they ever have in the past. The main focus of my research was the attitudes and perceptions of teachers towards collaboration and their perceptions of collaboration with service providers. In order to provide the most appropriate and least restrictive environment possible for students with disabilities all teachers and providers must be "on the same page." I found some barriers which restrict collaboration between general education teachers and related service providers.

Introduction

1.1 Identifying the Problem; Creating a Purpose

As classrooms become more and more integrated with students with disabilities, all educators must acquire more knowledge so as to better accommodate these children in the general education classroom. One way teachers may gain knowledge about their students is through collaboration with other specialists or related service providers. Some of these related service providers include people such as the Occupational therapist, Physical therapist, or Speech and Language provider. These individuals contain knowledge about our students that is more specialized than what the general education or even the special education teacher may know. Collaborating with these individuals would expand the knowledge of all teachers connected to the child. Collaboration could help teachers better understand each child more specifically. Therefore accommodations or modifications to instruction would be more individualized and appropriate. To do this teachers must be willing to first acknowledge and accept all students in the classroom; grow as educators and most importantly collaborate with all individuals who impact their students learning.

The philosophy a teacher holds about children with disabilities is a major factor of how teachers may react and impact their willingness to participate with an inclusive classroom. A teacher's perspectives on students' abilities are also important.

> All students can learn, all students have the right to be educated with their peers in age-appropriate heterogeneous classrooms with their neighborhood schools, and it is the responsibility of the school community to meet the diverse educational needs of all its students regardless of ability level, national origin, linguistic, cultural and family background. (Hunt, Soto, Mailer, and Doering, 2003, pg. 315)

With this philosophy, teachers must not rely solely upon themselves to educate all children but must embrace the help and knowledge others can provide. Teachers must work together to create the best learning environment possible for all students. Classrooms are no longer only one teacher instructing several students. On the contrary, classrooms have become much more integrated with other adults such as, paraprofessionals, one on one aide, and other teachers pushing in the classroom. One such teacher may be the special education teacher or related service provider. As the needs of our students grows so does the number of different educational providers. The more needs a student may have will increase the number of people working with that child. All these people are vital to the growth and independence of the child.

Students with disabilities are surrounded by many adults each and every day. Each teacher and service provider knows and understands their child but only within their own classroom setting. This is why collaboration among these two groups of professionals is important. What children are learning in each section of their day must be transferred consistently to other parts of their learning day. It is not productive or beneficial for knowledge and skills to only be applicable in one setting. A student must be able to use their skills in all areas of learning and in life. Collaboration between teacher and service provider has not been reached to its fullest potential even though it is important to student learning!

1.2 My Story

As a young child, as far back as I can remember I have always had friends and relationships with physically challenged people. Growing up my uncle used a wheel chair, due to diabetes and I watched how he struggled getting around, working, and even driving. However, with these struggles I also recognized the fact that he still remained independent even after losing both his legs. In elementary school, I went to a school with a diverse student body. Some students were rich, poor, and disabled. Unlike many of the elementary schools around my area, this was one of the few that had a special education program that encompassed students with severally physical and mental disabilities. These students were placed in a separate classroom for most of the learning day. We were integrated for things such as lunch, recess, specials, fieldtrips, and some academics like morning work.

As we transitioned into the middle school, these students were seen even less with the general public of our student body. Again, these students were only "included" for brief times such as specials, lunch, and recess. I began to see in middle school how the dynamics of this separation affected the student body. Many students in the general classrooms were unwelcoming to students with special needs, often making fun of them because they were different or simply did not associate or talk with them. I felt that these actions were a result of fear towards the unknown. Students with special needs were not something that was within the "norm" of their previous school. The majority of the general population of the middle school had never known a student with special needs ever in their life. Many of us children who went to the same elementary school with students with disabilities continued our friendships, however basic it may have been. The separation of differences among us as students only continued to increase as we moved in to high school. In high school many students were cruel to the students

with disabilities. With the influence of older and even more unaware students, the students with special needs became ridiculed and their differences pointed out. Many of us, including myself, did not do or say much to try and change the situation. I regret this decision even today.

During college and my many Master's degree classes I have participated in practicum where there were students with special needs. One placement in particular I worked with a student one-on-one and was able to see and experience some of what he dealt with on a daily basis. This child had Cerebral Palsy, was non-verbal, and had little motor control. This child received many services throughout the school day. These services included speech/ language, occupational therapy, physical therapy, reading specialists, and multiple daily visits to the nurse. In working with this student I saw firsthand how "included" he truly was in his general education classroom. I saw the many times that he was pulled-out of class for one or more of his services. As a result he would miss academic lessons and activities within the classroom. I was able to recognize how he struggled to be a part of his class community when he was only present for a few minutes at a time. It was frustrating for not only this student, but for myself and the special educator to see this constant lack of connection.

As I look back on these experiences in my life I realize that each one has influenced me in specific ways. I find myself constantly focusing my attention towards issues that deal with students who have special needs. I have always wanted to be a teacher and be a part of student learning and growth, but it has always been my philosophy that "all students can learn when given the right tools and opportunities." I feel that this has come from my personal experiences not only through my primary days but also through college as well. I see that my work with students with special needs has strengthened my belief that all educators must give our students the right tools to learn and be successful. With these many experiences, I approach my research

with a sensitive view on the subject of inclusion. I believe in providing appropriate inclusion opportunities for all students. This is not simply having students "in" the classroom; this must be all students participating in the most appropriate ways possible. All students by law are given the opportunity to be in the general education classroom. We must find a way to keep these students appropriately in the classroom so they may learn and develop from interacting with other students of all learning levels. These interactions will help form and develop relationships that are not academically based but will be beneficial throughout their life. Lessons in tolerance, acceptance, and humility can be taught within the inclusive classroom.

1.3 Forming my Inquiry; Talking to Teachers

I began my inquiry by talking to teachers I worked with to evaluate their opinions about the issue of inclusive classrooms and collaboration. I talked to my former mentor teacher from student teaching and I asked her questions related to inclusive classrooms. I asked her about collaboration between teachers and related service providers and the experiences that she has had regarding the subject. She expressed concerns regarding students Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and making sure that all requirements were being met. Her biggest struggle was with time and placement. Many students in their IEPs required separate locations for testing or extra time for testing. Both of these conditions require support of other faculty members. Scheduling help for tests, quizzes, or other assessments takes time to accomplish. She also discussed that another disadvantage for students with disabilities in a general education class was the issue of being pulled-out for services. Many times students are missing academic time or activities that are supportive to the curriculum.   One recommendation that my mentor provided was to really work with the special education teacher in the beginning of the year. She stated that scheduling in the beginning of the year is crucial in making the student's day smooth and consistent. For students

that do need to be pulled out during academics the grade level has created a "safety net." At the end of each day one teacher of the three has quiet room while the other two have recess. This is a time for any student who has missing or unfinished work to complete this work. This is also a great time for the teacher to work one on one or in small groups with children who missed portions of the day in their classroom due to being pulled out. This initial contact with a teacher enabled me to concentrate my inquiry and solidify my own perceptions about the issue.

The purpose of my research is to understand the attitudes and perceptions of teachers towards collaboration and their perceptions of collaboration with service providers. In order to provide the most appropriate and least restrictive environment possible for students with disabilities all teachers and providers must be "on the same page."

Literature Review

2.1 Reviewing Literature that Informed My Research; an Overview

As I began to formulate my inquiry into the issue of collaboration and seek answers to the problem that I had identified, I formulated several key concepts that I believed would guide me to review the literature on inclusive classroom collaboration. Since I wanted to better understand the dynamics between teachers and related service providers, I initiated my search with the key words of 'inclusive classroom' and 'collaboration.' With this focus I was able to find studies related to collaboration among teachers within an inclusive classroom setting. These studies gave me insight into the many factors that affect collaboration between teachers and other professionals within the school. Many concepts were consistent factors in creating a positive and effective collaborative experience while there were other consistent factors that created barriers for productive collaboration. Collaboration can be defined as "co-equal professionals' voluntarily co-planning to achieve common goals" (Friend and Cook as cited by Carter, N.,

Prater, M., Jackson, A., & Marchant, M. cite all the first time 2009, pg. 60) and "Collaborative teaming unites general education and special education in a process, which offers ongoing opportunities for the team members to share their skills, knowledge, and methods to facilitate learning" (Kritikos and Bimaum, 2003, pg. 93).

The several themes that emerged from the literature review were time, communication, sharing of experience, professional development, administration, and parental involvement.

2.2 Time

When considering collaboration, among professionals there are several issues and areas of concern that are important to address for the best collaboration to exist. One such factor is time. Time must be purposefully set aside and 100 percent available to teachers so that they can productively work together. Time was found to be a major factor in many of the studies. According to Hunt, Doering, Hirose-Hatae, Maier, and Goetz (2001) regularly scheduled meetings allowed for reflection, collaboration, brainstorming, and also time to listen to one another. Hunt et al. (2003) also argue that a positive outcome for regularly scheduled time meetings allows teachers to reflect together on an ongoing basis, as well as providing the opportunity to seek the input of the child's parent(s). Taking the time to schedule meetings provides the opportunity to focus efforts on students who require intensive and comprehensive plans (Hunt et al., 2003). If there is less commitment to working with peers on problem-solving with collaboration, there will be less need to find time to participate in such an activity.

2.3 Communication

Another major element that must be considered for productive collaboration is communication. Parity among teachers is an important component to all aspects of collaboration but most importantly to communication. Without parity there will be a great discomfort felt

among members. Therefore, team members will be less likely to participate to their fullest. To overcome such obstacles teachers must be willing to work together and have a positive attitude. Having an open mind about change and working as a team will create a better environment for all to work in (Kritikos and Birnbaum, 2003). This positive attitude that is created will also help develop parity among team members and will foster an environment for collaboration (Smith and Leonard, 2005). If all members are seen as equal within the team, there will be less opportunity for dysfunction and unresolved conflicts. Parity will foster the feeling of support among team members to better cooperate and make decisions (Smith and Leonard, 2005). The feeling of support is also an element of good collaboration (Hunt et al., 2003) that is only developed through good communication.

2.4 Sharing of Expertise

At the center of all good collaboration must be sharing of knowledge to enhance one another's ability to support a student's learning in all areas of the school environment. More specifically, all members are able to gain knowledge that will better assist students in the general education classroom. Through the process of collaboration, sharing of knowledge can be an influential element. To create successful inclusive practices there must be successful circulation of information and knowledge between team members. Teachers must work together in sharing plans, planning together, and sharing multiple resources (Kritikos and Birnbaum, 2003). With so many team members each person can bring their own unique experiences, expertise and perspectives. Hunt et al. (2001) argues that when one person on the team shares their idea it will draw out the ideas of others, enhancing the creativity of all team members through these interactions. Hunt et al. (2001, pg. 251) also argues that "teachers wanted to learn from each other and have the opportunity to pick the brains of people who are outside their realm of

expertise." Through interviews Hunt et al. were able to better understand what teachers wanted from their collaborative experiences.

2.5 Professional Development

When working with students that have disabilities all faculty members working with the child must understand that child's specific needs. This takes a set of defined skills that are well developed. The child's needs determine the amount of supports necessary and personnel involved. For some students, the team may include a one-on-one aide, related service providers, such as a physical therapist, speech/language therapist, occupational therapist, or even a teacher of the Deaf. One of the many ways to obtain the necessary skills set is through education and professional development.

Professional development is an essential component for collaboration with inclusive classrooms. All teachers and support providers have expressed throughout the studies that they felt that professional development would help them to better contribute in their collaborative team and better support student needs. To best support students, teachers would be able to learn how to make more appropriate instructional and curricular modifications for students with disabilities (Idol, 2006). Idol (2006) also argues that by participating in professional development teachers would use sound disciplinary practices more effectively regardless of whether the student is a student with a disability or a student who is at risk for school failure.

By giving teachers the support they need they will feel more comfortable and more willing to participate with an inclusive classroom. More knowledge through professional development would also increase problem solving skills, allow teachers to better reflect upon their practices, better theorize on accommodations and solutions, and over all create more effective collaboration (Weiner, 2003). There are always new programs or improved methods.

It is important for teachers to stay with or ahead of their profession and always learn new ways that they can teach to better support all their students.

2.6 Administration

The leadership style is one of the most important factors to facilitating collaboration among faculty members. Principals who are in favor of inclusion displaying a positive attitude towards students with disabilities, are supportive, and work well with their teachers are found to be better principals by their faculty (Idol, 2005). Another portion of a principal's job is to ensure time for teachers to collaborate (Carter et al., 2009). Smith and Leonard (2005) argue that principals play a key role in helping to foster positive attitudes within their staff. However, without administrative involvement there is no external motivation for teachers to work through their differences and ultimately work together. Instead teachers will not work through their differences and end up working independently (Carter et al, 2009). Therefore, principals must foster commitment by providing opportunities for ongoing staff development and always support (Smith and Leonard, 2005).

2.7 Parental Involvement

Another aspect of collaboration for team working with students who have disabilities is to provide opportunities for parents to be involved in the collaborative process. Parents usually have insights to their child's likes, dislikes, and behaviors outside of the school setting. This information could be helpful to improving a student's learning within the classroom. Parents also play a critical role in the development and implementation of an academic or behavioral support plan (Hunt et al., 2003). While working in many classrooms with students having disabilities it is important to have the support and involvement from the parents. Without their help the child is not receiving consistent reinforcement and follow-through supports at home

(Hunt et al., 2001). Inconsistency could break down the process for a child to progress. Having parents involved is also beneficial to the parents as well. To have parents included broadens their perspectives on their child's curriculum, collaboration with teaching professionals, and inclusive educational practices (Hunt et al., 2001).

2.8 Conclusion

Within these studies, there have been common ideas throughout. These many issues that have been discussed are all essential to creating and maintaining a positive and productive collaborative experience for all members. There is a gap in the research when considering collaboration between general education teachers and related service providers. I have found that much of the research suggests collaboration among general education teachers and special education teachers. The research also shows the impact that administration has upon its faculty members. However, there is little research investigating collaboration between general education teachers and related services such as speech/ language pathologist, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and teacher's of the Deaf.

My main question that I hope to answer in this research is:

- What are the attitudes of teachers towards collaboration and their perceptions of collaboration with related service providers such as speech/ language pathologists, occupational therapist, physical therapists, and teachers of the Deaf.

- What barriers exist which restrict collaboration between the general education teachers and related service providers.

These two questions formed the basis of my research. I wanted to focus on teachers' attitudes and perceptions of collaboration specifically regarding their interaction with service providers. I believe that these specialists contain great amounts of knowledge that should be shared with

other educators working with students that have disabilities. By sharing their knowledge they will increase knowledge in the field. Teachers will better know and understand their student's abilities and needs for developing appropriate lessons and activities.

Methodology

3.1 Participants

The population for this study was general education teachers at the elementary grade level and related service providers, such as the occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech/language therapist, and the teacher of the Deaf. There were 21 participants including 18 general education teachers and three speech pathologists. This was a convenience sample.

Teachers in four rural elementary school districts in Central New York were invited to participate in this study. These were general education teachers from grade levels ranging from kindergarten to sixth grade and 20 Speech pathologists at the graduate level from a local university. Out of a total of 80 teachers invited to participate, 21 responded to a questionnaire and six teachers volunteered to be interviewed. All participants and administrators received a cover letter introducing myself, explaining the study, and asking if they would consider participating in the study (assuring teachers and administration that participation was voluntary, there were no consequences to not participating, and all answers and names would be confidential) and a questionnaire. All four elementary school principals agreed and signed a consent form to allow the questionnaires to be distributed to their faculty. The director of the speech pathology program at the university also signed off to allow for questionnaires to be passed to her graduate students. Overall 21 questionnaires were returned along with signed consent form. Of these questionnaires, 18 participants were general education teachers and three were graduate speech pathologists. Interviews were conducted only with general education

teachers. Interviews that were conducted took place face to face and lasted approximately 30 minutes.

3.2 Interviewees

Mrs. R. is a third grade teacher and has been teaching for five years. Her classroom is a general education classroom and does not contain any students with an IEP. She does have a few students that receive services such as AIS math/ reading and speech.

Mrs. W. is a first grade general education teacher for a non-inclusive classroom. She has been teaching for over 30 years but this was her first year to the district. Although she does not have any students with disabilities within her classroom she does have experience with children who have disabilities as her child has Cerebral Palsy.

Mrs. M. is a third grade teacher with an inclusive classroom. She has been teaching in the inclusive setting for over 15 years. Mrs. M. has several students who have IEPs and is provided a part time aide for her classroom.

Mrs. L. is a fourth grade teacher and also has an inclusive classroom. This is only her fourth year of teaching an inclusive classroom. Within her class she has one student specifically who is academically very low and requires multiple services throughout the day.

Mr. O. is a fifth grade teacher. He has taught for over 30 years with an inclusive classroom setting. Over the years he has had children with many types of disabilities both physical and developmental.

Lastly, Mrs. C. is a kindergarten teacher with an inclusive classroom. Mrs. C. has been teaching for five years and this was her third year with an inclusive classroom.

3.3 Instruments

A four page questionnaire consisting of general, open ended questions, single-response items, categorical responses, multiple responses, rating scales, and a likert- type item was used to gather information for this study. This questionnaire asked specific questions in regards to the teacher's gender, position held at the school, and number of years in teaching. The questionnaire also asked specifics about teachers' opinions and feelings about their experiences regarding collaboration, inclusive classrooms, and with whom and when they participated in collaboration. This questionnaire also asked how teachers feel about their own personal skill set for inclusive classrooms.

Interviews were conducted in a face to face session. The interviewees were general education teachers. All interviewees were asked about their feelings and opinions about collaboration in general and their ideas and beliefs about collaborating with related service providers. Each teacher was only interviewed once for approximately 30 minutes.

3.4 Procedure

Prior to approval by SUNY Oswego's Human Subjects Committee I contacted the principals at schools targeted for this study. I emailed these four principals briefly introducing myself, my purpose for contact, and my intention of inviting participation from the teachers in their school. Each principal agreed to allow participation of their school and faculty members. From these emails I contacted the principals again for a face to face meeting. At my meeting I obtained written consent from each principal and provided them with my questionnaire, consent forms, and reminder for the teachers, and an envelope in which to place the completed questionnaires. All the principals agreed to distribute the questionnaires as they wanted to inform their staff prior to distribution. After the first week of distribution I went to each school

and passed out a reminder note to faculty members about the questionnaire. Out of 80 questionnaires distributed, 19 from general education teachers and two from a speech pathologist were returned. Out of 21 questionnaires distributed to a graduate level class in a local university only two were returned. Both general education teachers and graduate students were given a two week time frame from distribution to collection to complete the questionnaire.

I used snow ball sampling to complete the interview. I knew one of the teachers I interviewed personally. This teacher provided several names of other teachers that would be willing to participate. From this list of teachers, I was able to administer two more interviews in which new names were given to me for participants to contact. I contacted these teachers individually through e-mail explaining who I was, how I had received their name, and my intentions for contacting them. From this list I contacted 15 teachers and six teachers were willing and able to participate in the interviews. These interviews were mainly done after school in the teacher's classroom. One interview was conducted during a plan period and one interview was conducted at a teacher's home. All interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed into a word document. Each participant was allowed to freely speak about their ideas on collaboration and inclusive classrooms. From these interviews, perspectives of the general education teacher facilitated my understanding of collaborative practices and processes.

Results

4.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was a 45 question survey which included four short answer questions. The distribution for participants for gender was 19 female and two male. Eighteen participants were general education teachers and 3 were speech pathologists (Graph 1).

Graph 1: Position Held: (General education and grade level, Special education, OT, PT, Speech/Language, Teacher of the Deaf)
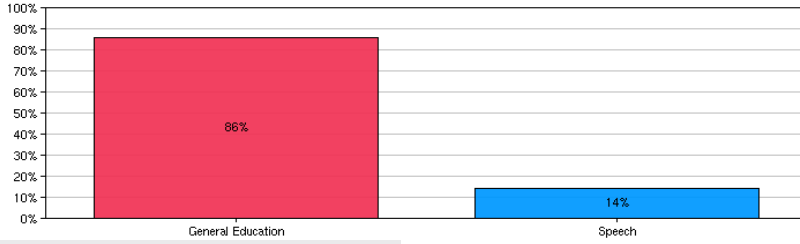
Value	Count
General Education	18
Speech	3

One hundred percent of respondents answered that they had participated in collaboration. Fifteen teachers had inclusive classrooms and six did not. Twenty-one participants had also participated in collaboration with a general education teacher, special education teacher, speech/language pathologists, and a one-on-one aide. Eighteen participants collaborated with occupational therapists, 17 with physical therapists, and six with a teacher of the Deaf (Graph 2).

Graph 2: Please answer Yes, No, or N/A. Have you ever collaborated with...

	Yes	No	N/A	Total
Other General Education Teachers?	**100.0%** 21	**0.0%** 0	**0.0%** 0	**100%** 21
Special Education Teachers?	**100.0%** 21	**0.0%** 0	**0.0%** 0	**100%** 21
One-on-One Aids?	**100.0%** 21	**0.0%** 0	**0.0%** 0	**100%** 21
Paraprofessional?	**95.2%** 20	**4.8%** 1	**0.0%** 0	**100%** 21
Occupational Therapist?	**85.7%** 18	**14.3%** 3	**0.0%** 0	**100%** 21
Physical Therapist?	**81.0%** 17	**19.0%** 4	**0.0%** 0	**100%** 21
Speech/ Language Pathologist?	**100.0%** 21	**0.0%** 0	**0.0%** 0	**100%** 21
Teacher of the Deaf?	**28.6%** 6	**66.7%** 14	**4.8%** 1	**100%** 21
Parents?	**95.2%** 20	**4.8%** 1	**0.0%** 0	**100%** 21

When asked if there was parity in the collaborative group, 62% (13) teachers responded yes, 5% (1) answered no, and 33% (7) did not answer (Graph 3).

Graph 3: Is there parity in your collaborative group?

Value	Count
Yes	13
No	1
N/A	7
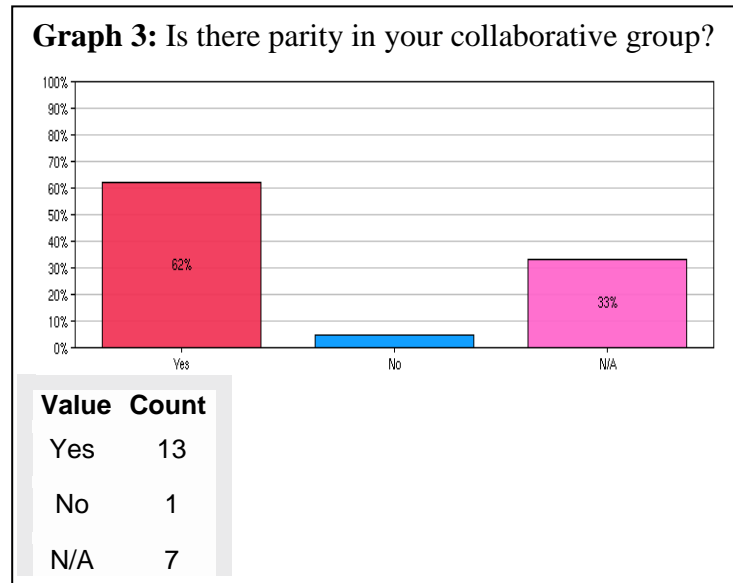
However, when asked if parity is important 67% (14) answered yes, and 33% (7) did not answer. 95% (20) answered yes to believing to be good communicators and 5% (1) didn't answer. When asked if others are good communicators 80% (16) answered yes, 5% (1) said no, and 15% (3) did not answer (Graph 4).

Graph 4: Do you find others to be good communicators?

Value	Count
Yes	16
No	1
N/A	3
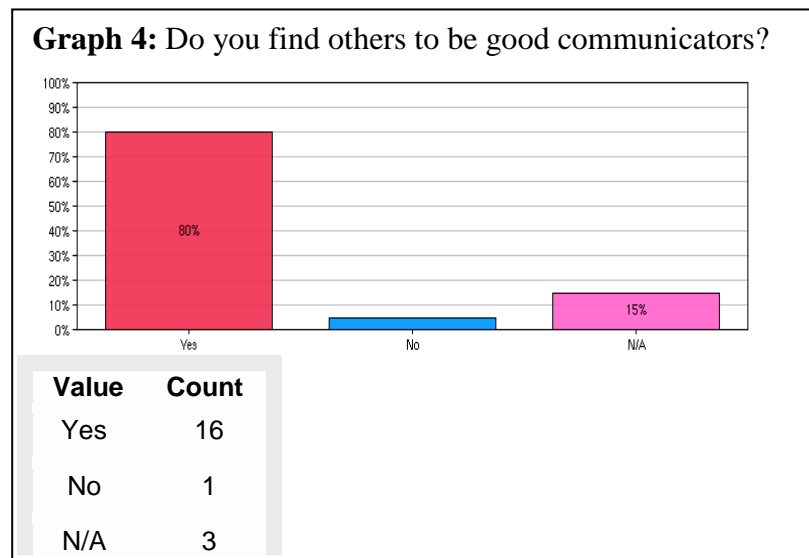
Teachers displayed that 52% (11) participate in collaboration almost every day, 33% (7) several times a week, 10% (2) once a week, and 5% (1) once a month (Graph 5).

Graph 5: How often do you participate in collaboration?

Almost every day: 52%

Several times: 33%

Once a week: 10%

Once a month: 5%

Value	Count
Once a week	2
Once a month	1
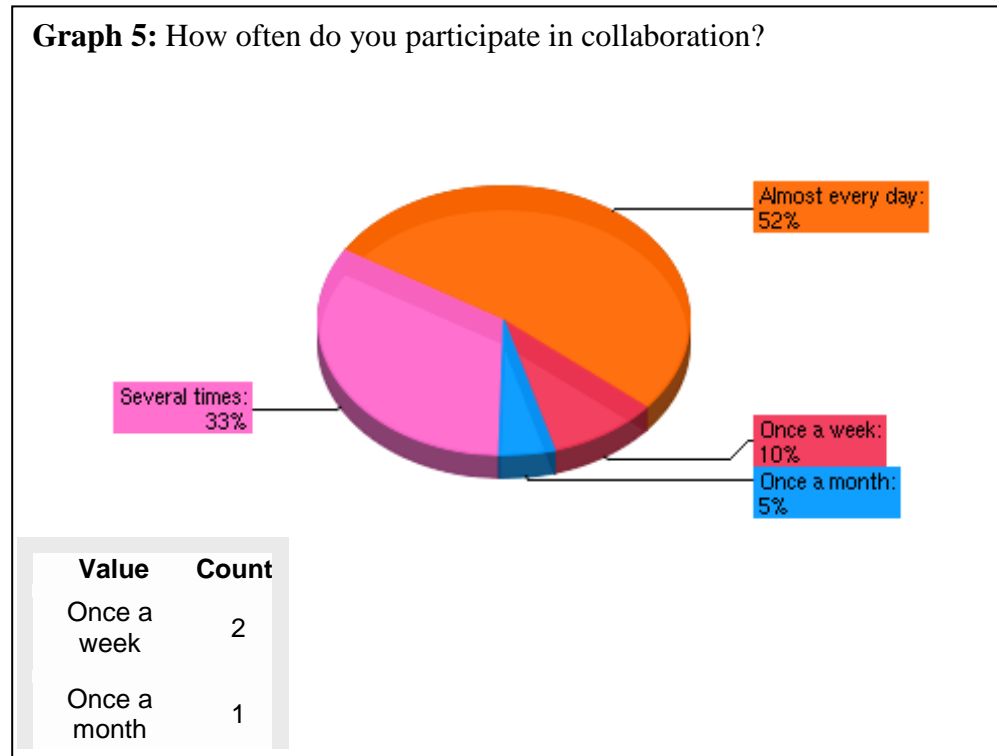
Teachers stated who they participate in collaboration with and how often in (Graph 6).

Graph 6: With whom and how often do you collaborate with: Please check all the appropriate places.

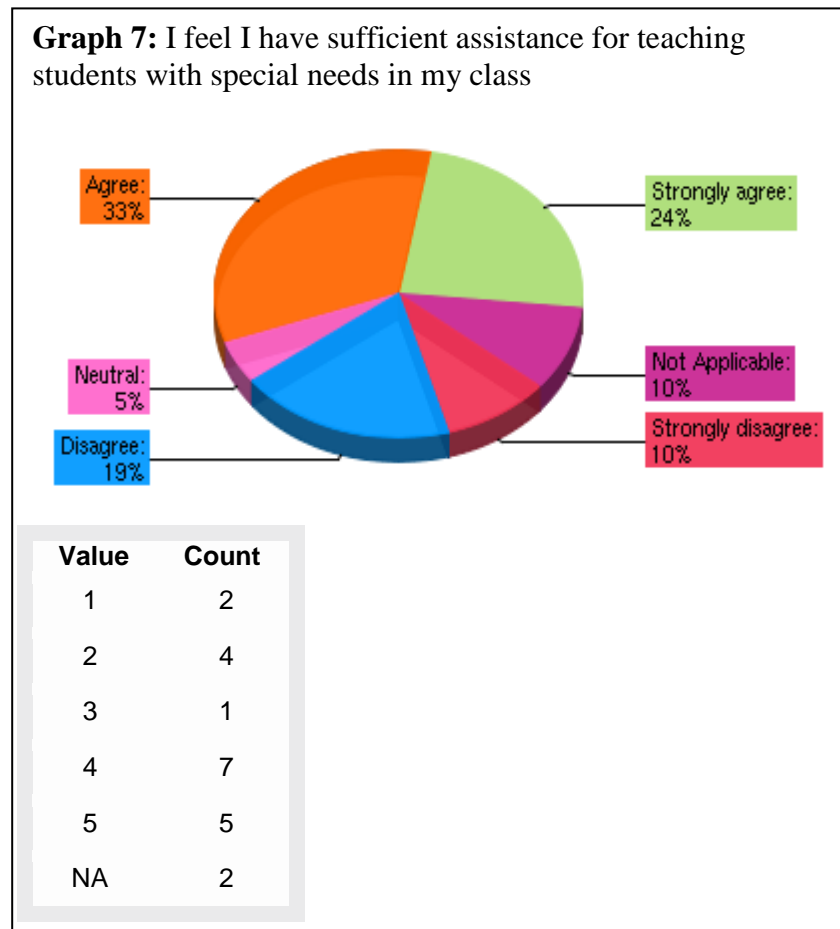|	Not at all	Almost every day	Once a week	Once a month	Several times a week	Once in the beginning of the year	Total
Other General Education teachers	4.8% 1	57.1% 12	14.3% 3	9.5% 2	14.3% 3	0.0% 0	100% 21
Special Education teacher	14.3% 3	38.1% 8	23.8% 5	14.3% 3	9.5% 2	0.0% 0	100% 21
One-on-one Aid	38.1% 8	38.1% 8	9.5% 2	0.0% 0	9.5% 2	4.8% 1	100% 21
Paraprofessional	38.1% 8	19.0% 4	19.0% 4	4.8% 1	14.3% 3	4.8% 1	100% 21
Occupational Therapist	28.6% 6	9.5% 2	23.8% 5	23.8% 5	0.0% 0	14.3% 3	100% 21
Physical Therapist	42.9% 9	9.5% 2	9.5% 2	23.8% 5	0.0% 0	14.3% 3	100% 21
Speech/Language Pathologist	19.0% 4	9.5% 2	19.0% 4	33.3% 7	0.0% 0	19.0% 4	100% 21
Teacher of the Deaf	90.5% 19	0.0% 0	9.5% 2	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	100% 21
Parents	4.8% 1	19.0% 4	28.6% 6	19.0% 4	23.8% 5	4.8% 1	100% 21

Teachers were asked if they felt that they had sufficient skills to teach students with special needs in their class and 48% (10) agreed with this statement and 38% (8) stated that they strongly agreed with this statement, 5% (2) disagreed, and 10% (2) did not answer. Teachers were asked if they felt that they had sufficient training to teach students with special needs, 33% (7) agreed that they had sufficient training, 29% (6) strongly agreed, another 29% (6) disagreed that they did not have enough training, and 10% (4) participants chose not to answer.

Teachers were asked if they felt they had sufficient assistance in a classroom with special needs 33% (7) answered that they agreed they did, 24% (5) strongly agreed, 19% (4) disagreed,

10% (2) strongly disagreed to having sufficient support, and 14% (3) teachers chose not to answer at all (Graph 7).

Graph 7: I feel I have sufficient assistance for teaching students with special needs in my class

Value	Count
1	2
2	4
3	1
4	7
5	5
NA	2

When teachers were questioned if they felt competent managing students with severe special needs 5% (1) strongly agreed, 38% (8) agreed, 33% (7) disagreed, and 14% (3) strongly disagreed (Graph 8). Teachers felt strongly that related service providers were an asset to understanding their students with special needs with 48% (10) strongly agreeing, 43% (9) in agreement, and 9% (2) did not answer.

Graph 8: I feel competent managing the behavior of children with severe special needs

Agree: 38%

Strongly agree: 5%

Not Applicable: 10%

Strongly disagree: 14%

Disagree: 33%
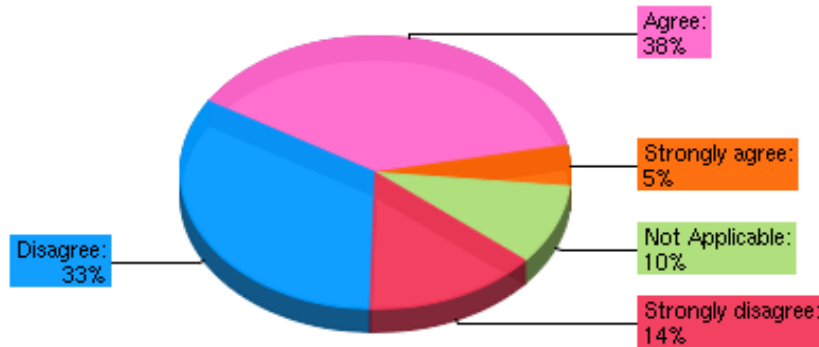
Value	Count
1	3
2	7
4	8
5	1
NA	2

Rating the quality of collaboration on a 0-10 scale the average answer from participants was an 8, 10 being the highest answered value with 47% (10), and 7 being the second highest value with 19% (7) (Graph 9).

Graph 9: Rate the quality on a 0-10 scale of your collaboration time with others.

Value	Count
9	10
8	3
7	4
6	2
5	1
4	1
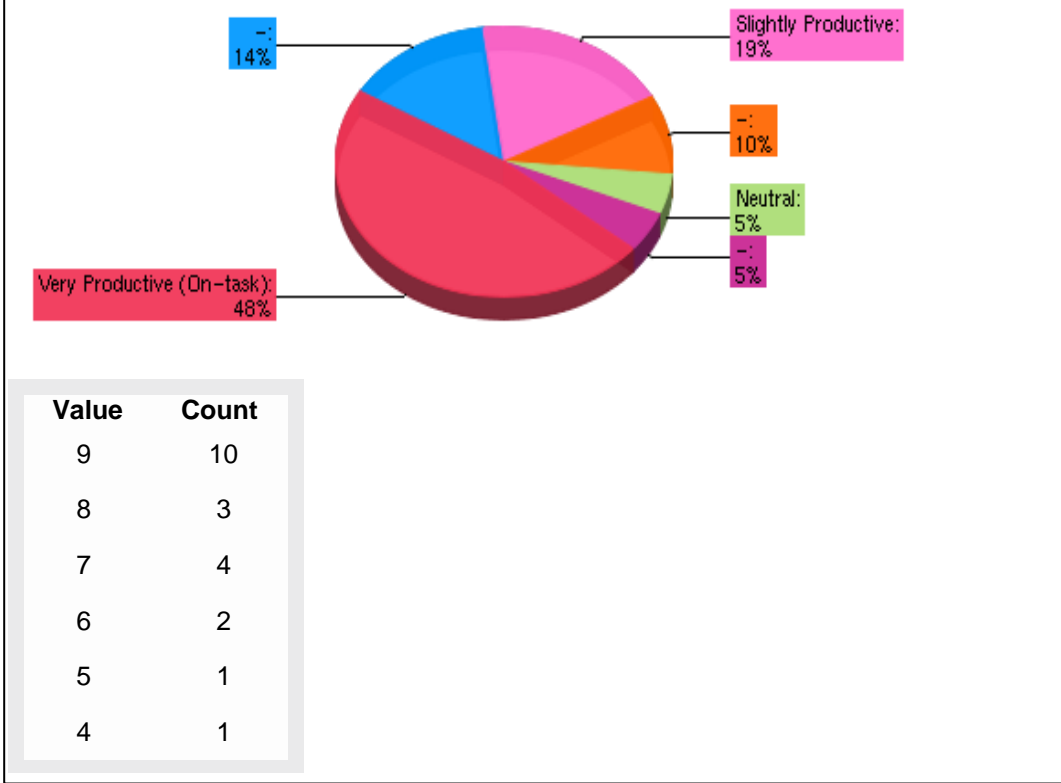
Teachers rated the importance of collaboration 81% (17) to be a value of 10, 5% (1) valued the importance of collaboration to be a 7, and 14% (3) stated that the importance was a 6. When asked about collaboration being important to being a good teacher 80% (17) strongly agreed and 20% (4) moderately agreed.

4.2 Questionnaire Short Answer

Findings included participants' report of teachers' feelings about collaboration in general (Item 1), how additional time would be allocated (Item 2), and lastly, teachers were asked to rate their personal collaborative experience (Item 3). All four questions were answered by all 21 participants.

In item 1 of the questionnaire short answer, respondents were asked to discuss their feelings about collaboration; this could be in general or with colleagues such as an occupational

therapist, physical therapist, speech pathologist, or teacher of the Deaf. A summary of response

categories and examples can be found in Table 1 (R= respondent number). Four common

categories emerged from the data. *Collaboration is an essential key to the success of any student*

was mentioned most frequently (R= 8), *planning* was the second most frequent response (R=7),

essential to provide daily instruction for student success was the third most frequent response

(R=6), and *difficulties* was the fourth most frequent response (R=5) (e.g., *difficult to meet on a*

regular basis, collaboration is not common with OT and PT, no time to meet).

Table 1
Summary of participants' feelings towards collaboration, inclusive classrooms, the allocation of
additional time, and teacher ratings of their personal collaborative experience.

Categories (number of responses)	*Comments*
❖ *Collaboration is an essential key to the success of any student* (R= 8)	"Important to discuss concerns and needs of students to really know students potential"
❖ *Planning* (R=7)	"Collaboration is helpful in planning for activities and modifications for students with special needs"
❖ *Essential to provide daily instruction for student success* (R=6)	"New ideas are shared. Ideas about how to better support students"
❖ *Difficulties* (R=5)	"difficult to meet on a regular basis" "I value their opinion, but there is no time to meet with these people (OT, PT, Speech)

Item 2, participants were asked how they might allocate additional hours in their work

month. A summary of response categories and examples can be found in Table 2. Seven

common categories arouse from the data. *Preparation and creating new fun hands-on activities*

was the most frequently given response (R=10), *paperwork and reviewing assessment data* was

the next most frequently given answer (R=8). Responses were equal for *lesson planning,*

collaboration, and modifications/ differentiating lessons (R=7). There were five comments that

were unique in how to allocate the extra time, such as *grants, research, working with students,*

and clubs.

Table 2

Summary of participants' feelings towards collaboration, inclusive classrooms, the allocation of additional time, and teachers ratings of their personal collaborative experience.

Categories (number of responses)	Comments
❖ *Preparation and creating new fun hands-on activities* (R=10)	"Creating more smartboard activities"
❖ *Paperwork and reviewing assessment data* (R=8)	"Going over assessment data to help me differentiate instruction."
❖ *Lesson planning, collaboration, and modifications/ differentiating lessons* (R=7)	" I would use any time given to meet with my team and develop strategies, and work on modifications."
❖ *Other (R=5)*	"Grants" "Research" "Working with students"

Item 3, participants were asked to rate their experience with collaboration and to explain

their rating. Many teachers had both positive and frustrating elements to discuss when

considering their experiences with collaboration. A summary of response categories and

examples can be found in Table 3. Four common categories arouse from the data. The most

common response when discussing collaborative experiences was *essential for personal learning*

and teaching and essential for student learning. Many teachers found that collaboration was

beneficial to educate students with special needs (R=10). The second most common response

was *collaboration takes time and is hard to schedule due to the lack of time in the daily schedule*

(R=8). Teachers also expressed the *benefit from new ideas that are shared and how essential*

collaboration is for the success of all students (R=6). Lastly, participants expressed that

collaboration is sometimes week and participation is less focused and ineffective (R=5).

Table 3

Summary of participants' feelings towards collaboration, inclusive classrooms, the allocation of additional time, and teachers ratings of their personal collaborative experience.

Categories (number of responses)	*Comments*
❖ *Essential for personal learning and teaching and essential for student learning, beneficial to educate students with special needs (R=10).*	"Collaboration is essential for the success of our students. I am also a Strong advocate for differentiated instruction"
❖ *Collaboration takes time and is hard to schedule due to the lack of time in the daily schedule* (R=8).	"Meetings are 'on the fly' in Hallways, 5 minutes in the morning or after school which is giving up family time"
❖ *Benefit from new ideas that are shared and how essential collaboration is for the success of all students* (R=6).	"Collaboration has been a great learning tool for myself especially when you are working with a new teacher who brings a fresh idea to teaching."
❖ *Collaboration is sometimes week and participation is less focused and ineffective* (R=5).	"People 'forget' meetings, 'forget' to meet with children and ignore the child's needs. No carry through"

4.3 Interview

From the six conducted interviews, participant's reported of their definition of

collaboration (Topic 1), how often they collaborate and with who (Topic 2), their experiences

from collaborating with related service providers (Topic 3), how extra time provided would be

allocated (Topic 4).

4.4 *Definition*

     Respondents were first asked to discuss their definition of collaboration and what they believed collaboration to be. All six teachers responded that collaboration was *working together with peers for a common goal*. The ideas that were found from the research to be teachers' common goals were the three main categories that emerged from the data, *meeting student needs, co-teaching, and co-planning*. Teacher's stated that "working with a team, taking time to plan, reflect, and develop strategies" were all part of meeting a child's needs. Another teacher commented by stating that "meeting with special area teachers and trying to meet all the needs of the kids in all the various locations that they go through the day." One teacher commented that collaboration needed to happen with parents "it is important to include home and school together as a collective piece."

4.5 *Collaboration Frequency and Team Members*

     Participants were asked how often they collaborate and whom they collaborate with. All six teachers responded that they collaborated daily with at least one other peer. These peers varied depending on schedules and time. The most common response was *collaboration with grade level or team teachers*. Participants also responded that they collaborate *frequently with Teaching Assistant*. One teacher responded "I collaborate with team members once a week and my assistant daily." Teachers who collaborated daily with their grade level or team teachers all had common planning time at some point in the day. One teacher stated that they "touch base in the morning." I found that both teachers who worked closely and collaborated daily with their grade level teachers also "shared students." Teachers combined their classrooms for additional help with both high level and low level students.

4.6 Related service Providers

Interviewees were asked about their collaboration with related service providers. Five categories surfaced from the data. *Collaboration with related services does not happen at this time, no time to collaborate with related service providers, done individually "on the fly", personal benefits, and location.* Three teachers commented that collaboration with related service providers does not happen. One teacher stated "I don't find it truly necessary." There were many obstacles when considering collaboration with related service providers. One obstacle was time. Three teachers declared they did not have time to meet with related service providers. One teacher stated that "there is little time to get together," "during my planning time I meet with many teachers and set aside my regular planning, so I have to take that home."

Another struggle with meeting with related service providers was their time in the building. Every teacher stated that the occupational therapist (OT) and the physical therapist (PT) were not staff of the district and were not always in the building. The "OT and PT aren't always located in the building each day. They are only in the building a few days a week." One teacher stated that "it is a challenge with not having OT or PT in the building all the time because when you do have questions they are not always here. They have full schedules and do not have any extra time to meet and when they are not here they are at another school."

Teachers have described "meeting on the fly." One teacher stated "if we do have a chance to meet it is a quick 'fly by the night' kind of thing. 'Hey if you get a second could you stop down I have a question." All of the meetings that teachers have had with related service providers has been initiated individually. "There is nothing built into the system. It basically falls on me and I can do that. I do take it upon myself and it should be the classroom teacher if there is nothing else in place to make that collaboration a routine."

Four teachers described the positive aspects of a service provider pushing in to the classroom. "It would be beneficial to just have the students in the classroom more with the service provider." There were other issues about push-in that were a struggle for teachers to make it effective. One struggle was the time to plan. "It takes a lot of planning so that everyone knows what is going on, I think that is why it doesn't happen more often because we don't have the opportunity to get together and discuss what is going on in the classroom. We don't have the time to plan." "One time I did have an OT push in but we didn't have the time to plan. It just didn't really flow, we didn't figure out our 'dance'." One teacher was discouraged with personality conflicts stating "they have a program and they have an agenda that they feel they need to accomplish and it doesn't coordinate with the classroom." Distraction was another concern about teachers pushing in "It was nice that they[students] were here and didn't require the students to leave but sometimes it's necessary to minimize the distractions so that there isn't so much going on around them."

4.7 Additional Time

Lastly, participants a hypothetical question. "If you were provided 2 extra hours a day in your work day how might you allocate that time?" Two teachers stated that they would wish for that time to just have their whole class together all at the same time. "If I could have all my kids in the room and be able to teach writing, content, etc. to all my kids with teachers helping modify that would be amazing!" "Just to work with all of my kids, with no pull outs." Another teacher stated that "more time is on my Christmas list! I would use part of the time to collaborate with other teachers and the other part to get more into my lessons." Other ideas for how to use the extra time were "play." "Play time is sometimes a struggle to get in and I need that time for some of my younger students. Time spent playing is time spent building social skills."

Discussion and Interpretation

5.1 Summary

The main purpose of this study was to determine the amount of collaboration among general education teachers and their students related service providers such as, the occupational therapist, physical therapist, and speech pathologist. The main focus of my research was the attitudes of teachers towards collaboration and their perceptions of collaboration with related services. In order to provide the most appropriate and least restrictive environment possible for students with disabilities all teachers and providers must be "on the same page."

In this study I also wanted to investigate and uncover some of the barriers which restrict collaboration between the general education teachers and related service providers. Based upon my research and the data collected, I was able to make several conclusions: a) time, b) communication, and c) professional development as significant factors.

5.2 Discussion

My research data shows that there are many factors that influence and affect the attitudes towards collaboration between general education teachers and related service providers. These factors include both positive and negative elements that make up the dynamics of collaboration. From my research, factors that showed to affect collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers were time, communication, and professional development. These broad factors are consistent with much of the literature done by Hunt et. al (2001, 2003), Kritikos and Birnbaum (2003), Carter et al. (2009), Smith (2005), Ross (2002), Idol (2006), and Weiner (2003).

5.3 Time

Time is always a major factor. The issue of time continuously emerged.   When asked "How often do you participate in collaboration?" 11 of the 21 respondents stated that they participate almost every day. This may be true yet this collaboration is with a select few groups of professionals. The data shows that the collaboration is among other general education teachers, special educators, and student's one-on-one aides. There are few teachers participating in collaboration with related service providers. When teachers are collaborating with related services it is at most once a month. I believe the reasoning behind such little interaction between these two groups of people has much to do with time.

Teachers expressed that there is no time specifically set aside from the district which would be utilized for such specific collaboration. There is time set aside for teachers to collaborate within their grade level each day during their plan period and the district creates days so that multiple grade levels may collaborate together. Yet, no days are made so that teachers may collaborate with these specific people. Hunt et al. (2001) argues that regularly scheduled meetings allowed for reflection, collaboration, brainstorming, and also time to listen to one another.   Hunt et al. (2003) also argue that a positive outcome for regularly scheduled time meetings allows teachers to reflect together on an ongoing basis, as well as providing the opportunity to seek the input of the child's parent(s). Many teachers expressed that it would be convenient to have such days because services such as occupational therapy and physical therapy are hired outside the district. These professionals are not directly connected or apart of the district. These specific days would give teachers a specific time to discuss their students with these professionals rather than catching them 'on the fly'.

Teacher also expressed that they would love to have these professionals housed within their buildings as staff. This would make for better relations and more time to collaborate. This would be an ideal situation but is not practical due to budgets.

The data of teacher's inability to successfully connect with service providers is disturbing when considering how vital these professionals are to student's development and learning. One teacher commented that it is "difficult to meet on a regular basis, I value their opinion, but there is no time to meet with these people." Many teachers admitted that when collaboration does occur with these professionals "meetings are 'on the fly' in hallways, five minutes in the morning, after school, or when the students are getting picked up." Unfortunately because of this information about a child, techniques used that are successful or unsuccessful, and the many other topics of concern are not being shared among these two very important groups of people. These feelings of frustration were also found by Carter et al. (2009) who states that teachers are showing frustration with collaboration because they do not have enough time, are finding it difficult to find the time, or there are other mandatory meetings planned during the scheduled collaboration time.

5.4 Communication

Many teachers expressed frustration with their experiences with collaboration. These frustrations came from their difficulties with communicating with other members of the group. Parity was an interesting topic for teachers to discuss. Many were hesitant and gave politically correct answers or did not respond at all about it. I believe that many teachers did not respond to question about this topic because the issue of parity can be controversial. Teachers do not like or want to say that they do not get along with their colleagues in a group setting. It may be seen as unprofessional. This barrier of not having parity within the group could easily deter from great

collaboration. It is an element contained in collaboration which must be cultivated. In fostering better relationships and developing the sense of equality within the group, parity will foster the feeling of support among team members to better cooperate and make decisions (Smith and Leonard, 2005).

Conflicts can occur when there are problems with communication. When teachers are unable to express themselves in a way that is comprehensible to their colleagues, information and knowledge are not as effectively shared. Poor communication between teacher and service provider also affects the experience of collaboration. If both parties do not feel their goals are being understood and accomplished within the meeting it is likely that this group will not work together so frequently. It is important that both teacher and related service provider feel comfortable and productive when together.

The issue of communication I believe can be resolved with time and practice. Like many things that are new they are difficult and unsteady. Relationships are the same. When teachers and professionals are not familiar with one another it is a struggle to communicate successfully with one another. This issue of unfamiliarity was also found by Carter et al. (2009). In this they state, when teachers have only worked together for a short amount of time or never before, they may not share the same perspective about students and their disabilities, or agree upon a problem that needs to be addressed (Carter et al., 2009). As the group continues to meet and becomes more comfortable with one another, the likely hood of more frequent collaboration increases.

5.5 Professional Development

Another factor that affects collaboration between teachers and related service providers was language and professional development. Many teachers felt that they could use additional professional development to help them better understand their child's services. Many teachers

only knew or understood techniques that were being implemented for their child. They were less familiar with how and why these techniques were being utilized. Many teachers expressed that they also did not share the same language as the service providers which made it sometimes difficult when discussing the child and how they may incorporate elements of therapy into their classroom. Professional development for both teacher and related service provider would offer the knowledge that both parties seek to better understand.

Professional development for better understanding of what goes on in therapy sessions, the goals, techniques and reasons behind it all would greatly help teachers' basic understanding. "Teachers who are more informed and trained feel more competent in educating children with special needs in an inclusive setting" (Ross, 2002, p.21). I also believe that provided professional development therapists would gain a greater awareness of the topics, issues, and goals that are set within the classroom. In doing so new skills will be acquired. I believe that this could help with some of the time and communication issues. If teachers better understood their child's therapy, communication about the child would be more specific and as a result be more productive. Language of therapy and techniques were not found in previous research but were a great part of my findings. These create barriers for both teacher and service provider in developing better communication and stronger relationships. More knowledge through professional development would also increase problem solving skills, allow teachers to better reflect upon their practices, better theorize on accommodations and solutions, and over all create more effective collaboration (Weiner, 2003).

The main attitudes towards collaboration I believe are a direct result of the barriers which teachers and related service providers face. The issue of time, communication, and professional development all play a role in the experience and effectiveness of this specific collaboration. If

teachers were given specific regulatory times to meet with related service providers' information could be prepared for such meetings and much could be accomplished. As meetings become regular communication between both parties would improve and both teacher and therapist would become more familiar with one another. Providing professional development for teachers to better understand their child's therapy sessions would also increase knowledge and understanding. This would also impact communication in a positive way. In reducing these three main barriers I believe that knowledge and information could be shared more frequently and effectively. In doing so a child's learning experience would increase by carrying over the information gained from both classroom and therapy to both settings. By creating consistency the child will then be able to generalize knew knowledge and become more independent.

5.6 Limitations

As I do believe my research to be important, it did however have its limitations. One such limitation and the largest of all was time. My research consisted of a four week time period to obtain approval by administration, distribute questionnaires, and conduct individual interviews. Due to only working in each of the elementary buildings as a substitute teacher, many of the teachers I requested to participate were not familiar with me as a person. This was a limitation on how teachers felt about their participation in completing the questionnaire. The validity of a questionnaire is based upon the amount of responders. According to Thomas (2005), "The return rate in some research projects is as low as 10 or 15 percent" (p. 109).

Once a convenient sample of schools was chosen, I was restricted in the number of teachers receiving the questionnaire. This limited my findings as only 21 participants out of 100 requested participated. Interviews were also limited due to the convenient sample population chosen for this study. In having familiar relations to only a few teachers I was required to

network through these teachers to find other willing participants to interview. Due to such restrictions on population and using a sample of convenience generalizability of this study cannot be assumed.

5.7 Implications

My research implies that many teachers find collaboration with the related service provider to be beneficial for their knowledge of the student as well as their teaching and instruction. As more students with disabilities are included into the classroom teachers need to advance and expand their knowledge, training including instructional techniques to provide appropriate education to all learners. One way to advance both of these skills is by collaborating with their students therapists. These professionals contain a vast amount of training and knowledge of individual children which must be transferred to the general education teacher. This transfer of knowledge will better help support the child in retaining techniques learned in therapy to their classroom routines which will hopefully create generalization and potential follow through to other aspects of the child's life and learning. When general education teachers and related service providers collaborate with one another both can participate in knowing and utilizing consistent language, tools, and techniques with the child both in and out of the classroom. Consistency is the key to retention along with generalization for the child. Skills acquired in therapy and utilized in the classroom can then eventually be generalized and used in other areas of life and learning. All of which increase a child's skills of becoming more independent.

5.8 Recommendations for Future Research

In order for teachers and related service providers to collaborate more often and more effectively there must be time specifically set aside within both the teacher's and therapist's

schedule. I would recommend using a much larger sample population of teachers that are still relatively similar in both size and economic standings. It would be preferable if the researcher have an already existing relation with the participants. This may evoke more of the sample population to participate not only in completion of the questionnaire but also in interviews. This would elevate the validity of both instruments of data collection. Time given to teachers to complete the questionnaire including several verbal and written reminders may also give teachers the possibility to complete and hand in their questionnaire.

I believe that it should be a priority for districts to provide time for general education teachers and the related service providers to collaborate. Having both teacher and therapist working together can only enhance the child's chances and create more consistency among the multiple areas of the child's life. Consistency and repetition is how a child develops and generalizes information which leads to independence which is our ultimate goal!

In future research on this subject, I would also incorporate the participation of more related service providers. This would bring light to their view point and the barriers seen from their perspective. It is important to understand not only the perspectives, view points, and feelings from the teachers, but it is also important to understand the whole story which includes the related service provider's perspectives, viewpoints, and feelings. This would help better create a whole picture.

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Appendix:

Appendix A: Administration Consent
Appendix B: Teacher Consent
Appendix C: Reminder letter
Appendix D: Questionnaire
Appendix E: Interview Question

Appendix A

Fallon Blask
269 East 2nd St, Apt.3
Oswego, NY 13126
fallonblask@yahoo.com

Dear Sir or Madam,

      My name is Fallon Blask. I am currently a substitute teacher for several local school districts, and I am also a graduate student at SUNY Oswego. To finish my graduate studies, I am required to conduct research of an educational nature in order to complete a thesis study.

      I am writing to request permission to conduct my research at _____. The subject of this study is "How can general education teachers and related services such as, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech/language, and teachers of the Deaf collaborate to maximize service needs and learning for students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms?" This study would entail giving questionnaires to general education teachers of all elementary grade levels and related service providers.

      I will abide by all ethical standards and district policy in this study. All results will be kept anonymous and confidential, all participation will be voluntary and consent forms will be attached to all questionnaires. I will also plan to make the complete results of the study available for anyone who requests it.

      It is my hope that this research will open the doors of communication among faculty, or at least give some information that may help in future collaborative experiences.

      If you have any questions about the study please contact Fallon Blask by email, fallonblask@yahoo.com. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject, please contact Dr. Friedman (315-312-6381), chair of the Human Subjects Committee at SUNY Oswego.

      Questionnaires are due back to me by November 1, 2010, in the self addressed envelope provided.

Thank you very much for your time.
Sincerely,

Fallon Blask

Please sign this consent form for legal purposes only and return.
I have read the above statement about the purpose and nature of the study, and I freely consent to participate.

_____ _____   _____ _____
Participant's Signature   Date   Experimenter's Signature   Date

Appendix B

Fallon Blask
269 East 2nd St, Apt.3
Oswego, NY 13126
fallonblask@yahoo.com

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Fallon Blask. I am currently a substitute teacher for several local school districts, and I am also a graduate student at SUNY Oswego. To finish my graduate studies, I am required to complete a thesis. This survey you are about to complete is a portion of my thesis, on "How can general education teachers and related services such as, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech/language, and teachers of the Deaf collaborate to maximize service needs and learning for students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms?" I will be collecting data through quantitative methods and qualitative methods. Interviews will also be conducted with participants who indicate their willingness.

The survey in which you are about to participate investigates your attitude and perceptions of collaboration in regards to students with special needs. This survey has been approved by the Faculty Research Committee of Human Subjects of the State University of New York at Oswego. This survey is four pages consisting of multiple choice and short response questions. Each person's data in this study will be confidential. Your name will not be recorded. The school name is included on the form, so that I may keep a record of school's responding to the survey. By participating in this survey, you will help to create a dialog among teachers not only within the community of SUNY Oswego faculty, but also among teachers within the Fulton and Mexico and Whitesboro school districts. It is my intention to release a summary of this study to all participating schools. It is my hope that the results will open the doors of communication among faculty, or at least give some information that may help you in your collaborative experiences.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. Please take time to complete the survey, and leave in the envelope provided at your **main office** no later than **November 1, 2010**. If you have any questions about the study please contact Fallon Blask by email, fallonblask@yahoo.com. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject, please contact Dr. Friedman (315-312-6381), chair of the Human Subjects Committee at SUNY Oswego.

Thank you very much for your time.
Sincerely,

Fallon Blask

Please sign this consent form for legal purposes only.
☺ **Please return the signed portion of the consent letter with the completed questionnaire.**

I have read the above statement about the purpose and nature of the study, and I freely consent to participate.

_____ _____   _____ _____
Participant's Signature   Date   Experimenter's Signature   Date

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Appendix C

Fallon Blask
269 East 2nd St, Apt.3
Oswego, NY 13126
fallonblask@yahoo.com

Dear Teachers and Participants:

I would like to say thank you for taking time out of your schedules to fill out the questionnaire. Your opinions and comments are of great value to my research. If you have not done so yet there is still time. Please remember that there is no penalty if you choose not to participate. Again, thank you very much for your time and participation. **Surveys are due back no later than November 1, 2010 at the main office.**

Sincerely,

Fallon Blask

Questionnaire to Teachers

General Information:

- Gender: Male _____ Female _____
- Position Held: (General education and grade level, Special education, OT, PT, Speech/Language, Teacher of the Deaf)

  _____

- Number of years with teaching experience: _____ years
- Number of years with current district: _____ years
- Number of years at current grade level: _____ years
- How many years of experience do you have with inclusive classrooms? _____ years

Open-ended questions:

- How do you feel about collaboration? (in general or with colleagues such as OT, PT, Speech/Language, Teach of the Deaf)

  _____
  _____
  _____

- How do you feel about inclusive classrooms?

  _____
  _____
  _____

Closed-ended questions:

Rate the importance on a 0-10 scale, of how important collaboration is to you. 0 being not important at all to 10 very important. _____

Single-response Item:

Please answer Yes or No
- Do you participate in collaboration?   〔 〕Yes   〔 〕No
- Do you have an inclusive classroom?   〔 〕Yes   〔 〕No
- Have you ever collaborated with: 〔 〕Yes   〔 〕No
    o   other general education teachers?   〔 〕Yes   〔 〕No

- o   Special education teachers?   〔 〕Yes   〔 〕No
- o   One-on-one aids?   〔 〕Yes   〔 〕No
- o   Paraprofessional?   〔 〕Yes   〔 〕No
- o   Occupational Therapist?   〔 〕Yes   〔 〕No
- o   Physical Therapist?   〔 〕Yes   〔 〕No
- o   Speech/ Language Pathologist?   〔 〕Yes   〔 〕No
- o   Teacher of the Deaf?   〔 〕Yes   〔 〕No
- o   Parents?   〔 〕Yes   〔 〕No
- Is there parity in your collaborative group?   〔 〕Yes   〔 〕No
- Is parity important to collaboration?   〔 〕Yes   〔 〕No
- Do you find yourself to be a good communicator?   〔 〕Yes   〔 〕No
- Do you find others to be good communicators?   〔 〕Yes   〔 〕No

Categorical Response Item:

How often do you participate in collaboration? Place a check next to the appropriate answer

_____1. Not at all
_____2. Once a week
_____3. Once a month
_____4. Only in the beginning of the year
_____5. At the beginning of a new quarter
_____6. Several times a week
_____7. Almost every day

Multiple Response Item:

With whom and how often do you collaborate with: Please check all the appropriate places.

	Not at all	Almost every day	Once a week	Once a month	Several times a week (2-3)	Once in the beginning of the year
Other General Education Teachers						
Special Education Teacher						

One-on-one Aid					
Paraprofessional					
Occupational Therapist					
Physical Therapist					
Speech/ Language Pathologist					
Teacher of the Deaf					
Parents					

Rating Scales:

Rate the quality on a 0-10 scale of your collaboration time with others. Please circle your answer

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Completely unproductive   Highly Productive
Highly off-task   Focused and on-task

Self Anchoring Ladder Scale:

-First imagine that you consistently struggle with collaborating with other professionals each day you go to work. These struggles are over disagreements on multiple topics or ideas; let's consider this to be a "1."

-Second, think of a time where you were able to work with others so well that you were almost able to finish one another's sentences. You were able to collaborate and work together very well, there were never any problems, disagreements or difficulties along the way; let's consider this to be a "10."

-Where on the scale would you place the majority of your collaborative experiences? And why?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Likert-Type Items:

All things considered, I believe that collaboration is important to being a good teacher

____Strongly agree
____Moderately agree
____Slightly agree
____Neutral, no opinion, or undecided
____Slightly disagree
____Moderately disagree
____Strongly disagree

Semantic Differential Type Item

Please rate your experiences with collaboration and explain.

Great   .   .   .   .   . Terrible

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix E

Table of Interviewees

A table of interviewees, including teacher's first name, teaching position, number of years teaching, interview time, date, and location, would appear in this section**.**

Interview Questions

- How do you feel about collaboration and its process?
- What is your attitude towards collaborating with others?
- How do you feel about inclusive classrooms?
- What are some positive aspects of collaboration?
- When do you feel that you are most productive with collaboration?
- What are the negative aspects of collaboration?
- Why might you be frustrated to collaborate? What are some barriers that may keep you from collaborating?
- Who do you find you are able to be most successful with and to be the least successful to collaborate with? Why? (may be due to such things as philosophy differences, time, etc. be specific)