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EDPC 610 – Foundations II
Assignment Five

Journal Reflection – Parental Involvement

According to Salend, “A key component of effective inclusion programs is communication and collaboration with the student’s family.” Teachers should keep open lines of communication with families of *all* students in their classrooms. However, it is especially important when it comes to students with special needs. In these cases, teachers have the opportunity to collaborate with a student’s family members and let them be part of the curriculum planning process. Parents and family members can give great insight into the specific needs and learning styles of their child/family member.

When a child is classified for special education, a Comprehensive Planning Team is created for this student. Members may include, but are not limited to, the following people: family members, school administrators, general education teachers, special education teachers, paraeducators, school psychologists, special pathologists, social workers, school counselors, school nurse, occupational therapists, English as a Second Language (ESL) and bilingual educators. This team is so important for a child with special learning needs. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) that is created specifically for that student is a guide for all members of the team to follow. It is reference for teachers, professionals, family members and the student that includes a description of the student’s strengths and challenges, in addition to a list of annual goals and objectives for the student. It may also include additional services that the student will receive (including Assistive Technology,) as well as, any testing modifications that the student will need. The student’s family members are an

essential part of this planning process. According to Salend, "they can provide various types of information on the student's adaptive behavior and medical, social, and psychological history." Family members can also assist the team when selecting Assistive Technology or other related services. Once the IEP is created and implemented, the team must meet regularly and this meeting must include the parent or family member. This is essential in keeping open lines of communication with the student's family members.

There are many strategies that can be used to keep open lines of communication with parents. In order to promote parental involvement in the classroom, there are a variety of ways to share information with families. Teachers must meet regularly with families. While meeting with a student's parents, teachers and professionals make a conscious effort to build rapport and create a mutual trust and respect with this parent. Let the parent know that each member of the team is working as an advocate on the student's behalf. When working with students with special needs, it is important to have a certain level of flexibility. Although each student in your class should be treated as an individual, these student's needs are constantly changing. While meeting with parents it is important to keep a strict level of confidentiality. Parents want to know that teachers are not discussing their child with others or speaking about the student with other teachers or co-workers in a public setting. Discussions regarding the student should take place at planned meetings. The team should create an agenda which is provided to all members prior to the meetings and should contact family members to schedule the meeting at a time that is convenient for the parent. Parents should have the opportunity and should be encouraged, at these meetings, to address any issues they may be having and should give their view on the

student's progress and provide information on any challenges he/she may be having. Meeting regularly with parents is a sure way to keep open lines of communication.

It is important to keep on-going communication with all of your student's families, throughout the course of the school-year. It is especially important in addressing the needs of students with special needs. There are many ways to involve parents. Some teachers may choose to use written communication in the form of letters or notes home daily or when needed. But, when choosing this form or any form of communication, it is important to be aware any cultural or linguistic barriers that a family member may have. Depending on the needs your students, you may need to have your written communications to parents and families sent home in multiple languages. Some teachers choose to send home daily or weekly report card system for parents. This is a way for parents to track their child's progress on a daily or weekly basis. These progress reports should be tailored to the individual student, based on their specific needs. Many teachers also choose to create a classroom newsletter, which highlights student success, upcoming events and showcasing student work. Some teachers may choose to post these newsletters as part of their classroom homepage via the Internet. These newsletters are another great way to communication with parents.

In addition to newsletters, educators and school professionals may choose to communicate with parent through the Internet. Classroom Homepages are becoming more common amongst today's teachers. The main goal of a homepage is to enhance instruction while increasing communication with students and their parents. These homepages can consist of a variety of classroom activities. Teachers may choose to publish homework assignments, weekly

newsletters, classroom rules and useful links for students, just to name a few. Homepages are useful resources for students, other teachers and parents. Other teachers choose to post homework assignments and upcoming tests and quizzes on sites, such as www.schoolnotes.com. These sites make it easy for parents to keep track of assignment and projects that are due. In addition, telecommunication or e-conferencing is another way that technology can assist parents that cannot physically attend a parent meeting. In addition, e-mail communication is a time-efficient invaluable resource for teachers.

All of these methods are effective strategies that should be employed in order to keep open lines of communication with parents and family members. It is important to keep in mind that all families have different strengths and challenges. And, that each family comes from a different background and culture, which in turn may bring a different perspective to the table. But, by gaining the trust and respect of the family, you can work as a team on the behalf of the student. Each member of the team is responsible to communicate regularly with the parent and/or family members whether is be through planned meetings, written or verbal communication or technology-based communication. But, as an educator it is so important to keep in mind, that parental involvement is the key to a successful inclusive classroom.

Works Cited

School Notes. School Notes. 2006. EdGate. 19 April 2006
<<http://www.schoolnotes.com>>.

Salend, Spencer J. Creating Inclusive Classrooms Effective and Reflective and Reflective Practices for All Students. Columbus, Ohio: Merrill Prentice Hall, 2005.