HEALTH AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Collaborative Needs of Speech-Language Pathologists and Special Education Teachers in Public Schools

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The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) governs the services provided to children with disabilities. One component of this act is the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), which documents specific goals, services, and supports for each student. Students with speech and language impairments work with multiple providers, as listed in their IEPs, which often include a speech-language pathologist (SLP) and a special education teacher. These professionals each have their own role in the school, but due to their overlap of students, it is necessary for them to collaborate. Unfortunately, there are many challenges to successful collaboration, and strategies must be developed in order to better support the learning of their shared students.

This study utilizes a systematic literature review and qualitative focus group study to identify current practices and gather experiences and perceptions from local SLPs and special education teachers. Results from the nine articles included in the literature review confirm there are a variety of service delivery models used across settings, but barriers such as lack of training, personality differences, and limited resources often prevent collaboration. Participants from the focus groups reported similar barriers, expressing a need for collaborative options that preserve their time while prioritizing the student. Suggestions to improve collaboration included better communication of goals across settings, utilizing online documents to track weekly progress, and increasing the amount of time the SLP spends in the classroom.

Further research is needed to develop specific strategies and accessible resources that can enhance collaboration. Future studies should consider student outcomes, as none were reported in the current study, and widen their scope to include other professionals on the IEP team.

Research advisor Mandy Rispoli writes: "Hannah's project explored various collaboration models as well as successes, barriers, and needs of both special education teachers and speech-language pathologists. Her work in this area lays the foundation for designing effective collaboration structures to support partnerships between teachers and speech-language pathologists that lead to positive student outcomes."