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Simultaneous Renewal: An Inclusive Approach to Collaboration and Teaming

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Collaboration goes beyond direct service provision. It is critical for effective personnel preparation and professional development as well as high-quality program implementation to close the gap between research and practice in early childhood contexts. Simultaneous renewal provides a framework for continuity from teacher preparation, inclusive teaching practices, and professional development to engage all stakeholders in teaming processes that promote child outcomes and improve teacher practice simultaneously.

Keywords: simultaneous renewal; inclusive education; partnership

Outside, it is a cool and rainy spring day at Hillside Elementary School. Yet, inside, the atmosphere is warm and bright, with a hum of activity in the air. Down the corridor, one can hear engaging dialogue. An inclusive early childhood teacher, a mother, a teacher candidate, an early intervention provider, and a speech-language pathologist meet to develop support materials for a three-year-old preschool student who will be transitioning from home-based early intervention services to school-based educational services. Throughout the school, similar teaming and collaboration efforts are occurring between members of higher education and community-based partners. Inclusive early childhood teacher candidates work in collaboration with all learners, inclusive classroom teachers, related service providers, and families. Teaching and learning partners include: university education faculty, professional interns, district and partner schools, teachers, education professionals, community members, and students' families. This collaborative partnership model developed due to the unmet needs on the parts of individual stakeholders. Specifically, the district and school staff needed support for the implementation of meaningful inclusive practices. The teacher preparation faculty were in need of high-quality inclusive teaching models, inclusive mentor teachers, and school partnerships. This hypothetical partnership will evolve and thrive through consistent two-way communication and the formation of mutual trust and respect.

Although this specific vignette is fictional, the collaborative model, known as teaming, described happens in schools every day. Teaming is a byproduct of the increase in the number of children with and without disabilities learning together and demonstrates progress toward inclusive practices (Division for Early Childhood & National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009). Inclusive practices, a growing educational phenomenon, are defined as:

The values, policies, and practices [that] support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. (Division for Early Childhood, 2015, p. 10)

Inclusive practices aim to address the dynamic needs of all children and their families; yet, teachers continue to feel unprepared to meet the needs of children with disabilities in inclusive environments (Bruder, 2010; Busby, Ingram, Bowron, Oliver, & Lyons, 2012). In order for inclusive practices to be effective in maximizing learner outcomes, multiple teaming supports must be created in order to meet both learner and teacher needs. This article describes a collaborative model of inclusive teaming, a practice involving multiple voices and expertise of equal value, that can serve as a useful model to a variety of school- and university-based stakeholders.

Teaming and Collaboration

Collaboration can be defined as cooperation among a group of individuals who are concerned or involved in a specific undertaking (Dinnebeil, Hale, & Rule, 1999; Dunst & Paget, 1991). Like collaboration, teaming is a practice involving multiple individuals. However, in a team, members represent multiple disciplines, and each team member fulfills a specific role in meeting the comprehensive needs of all children (Dettmer, Thurston, & Dyck, 2005; Division for Early Childhood, 2015). In regard to supporting learners and teachers in inclusive environments, there are many collaborators to consider. For teacher educators, robust collaborations with classroom teachers, school administrators, related service providers, and families are required for the preparation and training of teacher candidates. These relationships must result in mutually beneficial outcomes for all stakeholders on the team. Traditionally, teacher preparation programs have placed teacher candidates in classrooms without coordination or communication about course content taught to preservice teachers and expectations for preservice teachers implementing the content and strategies in the classroom (Soslau & Raths, 2017). This model serves neither the preservice teachers or the learners in the classroom well since there is a lack of coordination and understanding among all involved (Soslau & Raths, 2017). As teacher educators, we must do more than simply use school partners as field placement opportunities for teacher candidates. We must contribute our professional expertise, while also recognizing the professional expertise and experience that school-based partners contribute to partnerships.

Therefore, an important first step in exploring potential collaborative members of a team is identifying stakeholders who are invested in the common goal of enhancing outcomes for all young children and their families (Hunt, Soto, Maier, Liboiron, & Bae, 2004). Potential stakeholders include education faculty from partnering institutions of higher education, community partners, school district and local educational agency representatives, pre-service teacher candidates, classroom teachers, and specialists, as well as families of children served within the program. These are stakeholders who need one another's expertise and support to thrive and to best meet the needs of all learners (see **Figure 1**).

Once the team identifies key stakeholders, it is essential to engage in a process wherein team members share their expertise, knowledge, and information. This will ultimately enhance team capacity and assist stakeholders in identifying various roles of team members. Identifying key stakeholders also helps with pinpointing current and ongoing resources that are needed for improving outcomes for all children and their families.

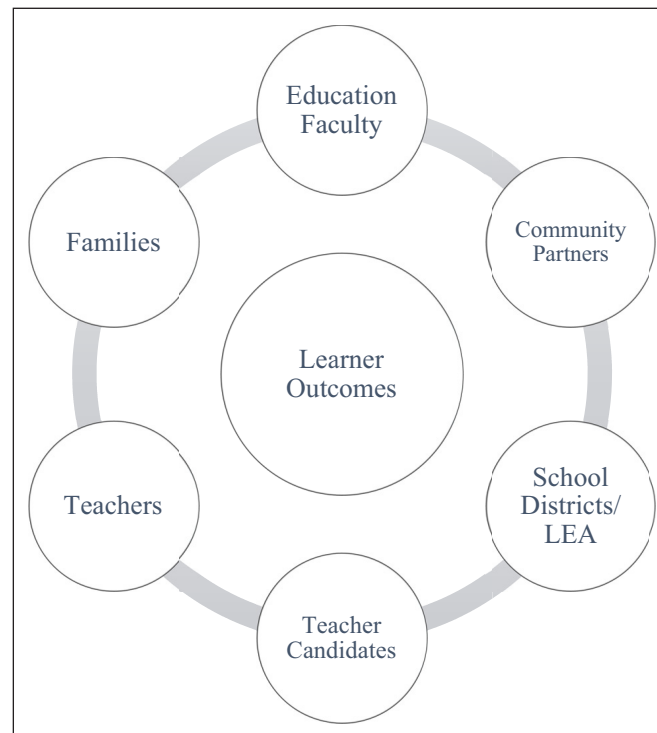


Figure 1: Inclusive teaming centered on learner outcomes.

Simultaneous Renewal

One method to engage in the collaborative teaming process is by utilizing simultaneous renewal (Goodland, 1994). Simultaneous renewal is a mutually beneficial process of teaming where all stakeholders' needs are equally important and valued in the collaborative goals. Goodlad (1994) posed the following question: What comes first, good schools or good teacher education programs? The answer, he posited, is that both must come together. Thousands of future early childhood teachers rely on innumerable model classrooms and high-quality community-based early childhood centers for field placements and internships (Warner-Griffin, Noel, & Tadler, 2016). The demand from teacher educators to secure these classroom placements is higher than the supply of willing and able district and school partners (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). The shortages are even more pronounced in rural settings and in college towns, where the number of high-quality placements for inclusive early childhood programs are limited (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2015). The long-term solution to the challenge of partnerships that serve both preservice preparation programs and schools is to renew the two together. There must be a continuous process of educational renewal in which institutions of higher education join schools as equal partners in the preparation and professional development of teachers (Goodlad, 1994). This process of simultaneous renewal refers to "mutual benefits of effective partnerships, clearly articulated for all constituent groups" (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2018, p. 4).

A common challenge in partnerships between institutions of higher education and community-based schools is that academic faculty members must work to overcome traditional power structures that impede true collaboration (Zeichner, 2018). This is observed in faculty members who take a "savior mentality," intending to rescue the school from their challenges (Mitchell, 2008) or with an "exceptionalism mindset," viewing their own needs as more important than those of the school (Teitel, 1994). Simultaneous renewal addresses these challenges by restructuring the teaming approach. All team members are treated as equal partners in the collaborative process. Universities must not be viewed as the sole owners of content and pedagogical knowledge. Simultaneous renewal has demonstrated effectiveness in enhancing collaborative relationships within K-12 settings (Shroyer, Yahnke, Bennett, & Dunn, 2007; Williams & Shaw, 2003) and content-specific environments such as math education (Bay-Williams, Scott, & Hancock, 2007). Whereas there is a dearth of literature applying Goodlad's (1993) theory of simultaneous renewal to early childhood teacher preparation, the emphasis on reciprocity and partnership is well suited for the field of inclusive early childhood teacher education. It is worthy of implementation to strengthen the relationships between institutions of higher education and schools and to create long-term partnerships.

An Organic Approach to Teaming

Teaming through a simultaneous renewal approach is particularly relevant to teacher educators and school based partners. Core ideas in both teaming and simultaneous renewal maintain that no sole person holds all of the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the diverse needs of young children with or at risk for disabilities and their families. When individuals work together, the best outcomes result. Simultaneous renewal takes an organic approach to teaming, in that there are not pre-established goals or specific steps in the teaming process. Rather, scholars suggest that partnering organizations answer a set of questions at the initiation of their teaming efforts, as well as revisit the questions throughout their collaborative work (Bier et al., 2012; Mountford, 2005). These questions include:

- Who will be involved in the collaboration?
- What will be the extent of the collaboration?
- What outcomes does the team expect from the collaborative efforts?
- What is the importance of these outcomes for the children and their families?
- What inter-organizational supports are needed for the success of the collaborative efforts?
- How will the team measure whether the targeted outcomes have been achieved?
- To what extent is the partnership meeting the individual needs of each partnering organization?

To answer each of these questions, representatives from the partnering school, institution of higher education, and community gather together to systematically plan for simultaneous renewal efforts (see **Table 1**). Teams answer the questions above while considering the assets that each entity brings to the team and their shared beliefs regarding the focus of their collaborative efforts (e.g., beliefs regarding inclusive practice

Table 1: Example of Collaborative Discussions Related to the Key Questions Teams Should Consider.

Key Questions	Examples of Collaborative Discussions and Decisions
Who will be involved in the collaboration?	The director for the Center for Clinical Practice in Education at the institution of higher education and the principal at the partnering school are the first to meet. In addition to their ongoing participation, they identify that one faculty member from the institution of higher education, one teacher from the school, and two community partners who are parents of children in the school will be core leaders in the collaboration. Last, they identify that two other faculty members will be involved, five other teachers, two related service providers, and up to 10 teacher candidates from the institution of higher education.
What will be the extent of the collaboration?	Teacher candidates and teachers will co-teach two full days per week. Co-teachers will use multiple co-teaching structures (e.g., one teaches, one observes; parallel teaching; team teaching) daily to deliver instruction to the students and support the development of knowledge and skills in the teacher candidates. The lead faculty member and teacher will co-facilitate a seminar weekly that includes the school's teachers and teacher candidates. Seminars will be culturally and contextually relevant for the school and community and support the development of new knowledge and skills for all involved. Once per semester, the teacher candidates will organize and implement a family outreach event, where students and their families come to the school for an extramural learning activity. In addition, twice per year, faculty and trained teacher candidates from the institution of higher education will assist with the screening of preschool and kindergarten students.
What outcomes does the team expect from the collaborative efforts?	The team aims to increase teacher candidates' knowledge and skills regarding inclusive practices, co-teaching structures, and effective approaches to instruction. The team also aims to increase teacher and teacher candidates' confidence and abilities in teaching all students in inclusive environments. The team hopes to see enhanced child outcomes, family engagement, and teachers who desire to remain at the school teaching in inclusive settings for multiple years.
What is the importance of these outcomes for the children and their families?	Children and families will benefit from the collaborative teaming, shared expertise, and additional resources available because of the simultaneous renewal approach to teaming. Children will also benefit from the smaller teacher-to-student ratios on the days in which teachers and teacher candidates co-teach together and the extra individualized instruction they receive through this co-teaching. The co-teaching structures, combined with weekly seminars, and assistance in screening all children will promote the identification of learning needs and implementation of effective instruction to meet the needs of all children within inclusive environments.
What inter-organizational supports are needed for the success of the collaborative efforts?	The lead faculty member must be supported with a course release each semester, so they have time to come to the school to observe teacher candidates, co-facilitate seminars, and engage in the school's outreach activities. No more than two teacher candidates will be placed with each teacher; the total number of candidates placed at the school will be dependent on the number of teachers who are willing to provide mentorship to teacher candidates and engage in a co-teaching form of instruction with teacher candidates two days per week. The school leader will submit seminars to state authorities for approval so teachers receive Continuing Education Units for their participation in the weekly seminars.
How will the team measure whether the targeted outcomes have been achieved?	The core leaders will meet once every other month to discuss the collaborative activities and the extent to which progress has been made toward the targeted outcomes. The team chooses to use primarily informal measures of data collection such as observation of teacher candidates and teachers in the classroom, reflections from teachers and teacher candidates, the number of joint seminars held, and family engagement in school activities. Some formal measures of data collection will include measures of child learning and teacher retention at the school and evaluations of teacher candidates' practice.
To what extent is the partnership meeting the individual needs of each partnering organization?	Three times per year, the core leadership team reviews the informal and formal data collected and evaluates the extent to which they show progress toward meeting a targeted outcome. The team discusses outcomes related to those that are priorities for each organization to ensure that simultaneous renewal is occurring for all stakeholders.

or the preparation of teacher candidates). Schools, institutions of higher education, and communities can strengthen the training and professional development of all teachers when they collaboratively identify shared beliefs and the course of action for bringing those shared beliefs into practice. Effective training and professional development directly effects the learning and development of all young children. Consequently,

through inter-organizational collaboration, teams work together to identify how each partner can leverage their assets to maximize the resources available to children and families. As such, meaningful relationships are required for problem-solving challenges that arise and threaten the meaningful learning of all children.

Mutual Reciprocity

For the program illustrated in the opening vignette and used as an example in **Table 1**, simultaneous renewal creates a model of mutual reciprocity that is beneficial for all stakeholders. Clinical school-university partnerships founded on practices of simultaneous renewal are advantageous for all parties (AACTE, 2018). At the most basic level, university licensure programs benefit from high-quality inclusive placements for teacher candidates' field experiences. Yet, benefits extend far beyond the university partners' need for clinical field experiences. In this model, mentor teachers receive support from teacher candidates that make fostering high-quality inclusive practices more attainable (Badiali & Titus, 2010). Additionally, engagement with schools creates opportunities for university-based faculty to engage in practice-based research. Utilizing simultaneous renewal, both school and university-based partners receive embedded professional development related to pedagogy and research (Henning, Gut, & Beam, 2015; Tschida, Smith, & Fogarty, 2015). Most importantly, the children within inclusive early education environments benefit from having more personal and practical resources (e.g., teacher candidates and university faculty) within their classrooms and school community (AACTE, 2018; Kamens, 2007; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007). In this model, all stakeholders should keep children's learning at the center of simultaneous renewal efforts, ensuring a shared vision where learners drive collaboration.

Conclusion

While scholars have identified that inclusive practices benefit all children, schools need ongoing support to implement high-quality inclusive practices. Therefore, schools and institutions of higher education must engage in intentional, well planned, collaborative practices, including all stakeholders, with a common goal of enhancing learning outcomes for young children and their families. Simultaneous renewal is a collaborative process that teams can use to promote meaningful collaboration for all partners and ultimately enhance children's learning outcomes.

Collaboration goes beyond direct service provision. It is critical for effective personnel preparation and professional development, as well as high-quality program implementation, to close the gap between research and practice in early childhood contexts. Simultaneous renewal provides a framework for continuity from teacher preparation, inclusive teaching practices, and professional development to better engage all stakeholders in teaming processes. Effective teaming processes promote children's learning and inclusion as well as improve teacher practice simultaneously.

The distinctions between the PreK-12 community and teacher education research community have contributed to challenges associated with implementation of best practices in inclusive school settings (Greenwood & Abbot, 2001). Engaging in a sustained process of simultaneous renewal tackles implementation challenges by targeting intervention through research specific to schools and classroom needs, while simultaneously providing high-quality teaching and learning environments for pre and in-service educators. Simultaneous renewal creates a framework for research in clinical models of teacher preparation and meaningful professional development for educators.

Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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