A CASE STUDY OF AN EARLY CHILDHOOD INCLUSIVE PROGRAM: TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND COLLABORATION

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By

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ABSTRACT

Today the issue of how young children with and without special needs play and learn together is getting more and more attention and support from a variety of sources. Although many educators and parents realize the importance of having effective early childhood programs that serve children with all abilities and their families, less clear are data about the essential knowledge and skills of early childhood practitioners needed to be effective. In addition, academic merger of the fields of Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Special Education (SPLED) has occurred in response to issues of inclusion; but the practical side to this merger is still not fleshed out very well (Darragh, 2007). This study focuses on what we might learn about a set of teachers in an early childhood inclusive program with regard to teacher professional development and collaboration of the teachers who come from diverse academic backgrounds.

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of six teachers concerning their professional development and collaboration within an early childhood inclusive program context. This study provides an empirical basis for examining the experiences that early childhood inclusive educators need to have in order to construct a deep and complex understanding of the early childhood knowledge base and skill sets required for providing meaningful educational experiences for children with and without special needs and their families.

To accomplish the research purpose and to describe the research questions appropriately, this study employed qualitative methodology to chronicle the experiences of six teachers in early childhood inclusive program in Northeastern U.S. This study adds
to the literature on ECE and SPLED by in-depth interviewing of teachers in both ECE and SPLED; teachers come from different academic backgrounds. A focus was on professional development, and collaborative team work for successful inclusion.

The participants for this study were two experienced general education teachers, three experienced special education teachers, and the Director of the program (N=6), all in inclusive classrooms in one program site. All participants had more than 5 years of teaching experiences in early childhood inclusive settings. Four data sources provided the basis for this study: 1) focus group interview, 2) individual interview, 3) observations, and 4) documents. With a lengthy and interactive process of data collection and processing that involved describing, analyzing, and interpreting data, the researcher synthesized perceptions of teacher professional development and collaboration from the participants’ perspective.

Research questions specified four different interests regarding teacher professional development and collaboration in early childhood inclusive program: 1) How do teachers perceive inclusion and their roles in inclusive program?, 2) How does the program practice ECE and SPLED for teaching children with and without special needs?, 3) How teachers develop their knowledge and skills to meet the needs of children in all abilities?, and 4) How teachers collaborate with other members in the program?

Though the analysis, the participants revealed the complexity of their practice of teaching in an early childhood inclusive program; and the themes identified were: 1) inclusion, 2) operations of ECE in relation to SPLED, 3) professional development, and 4) collaboration.
Each theme generated several sub-themes which had strong connections with one another. The issues that participants experienced as teachers in early childhood inclusive program were: 1a) the definition of inclusion was different as a function of academic backgrounds—whether they came with general or special education degree. 1b) teachers play two different roles depending on children’s abilities—developmental roles for children with special needs and general classroom role for typically developing children. This finding has implications for teacher preparation program in ECE and SPLED. 2) ECE and SPLED practice in the program was not balanced well but inclined more to SPLED approach, 3) professional development of teachers was done in two different ways: teacher preparation program, and in-service training. In-service training can be categorized in two types: (a) attending conferences or workshops outside of the setting, and (b) sharing knowledge and skills with other teachers in the setting, and this process overlapped with the way teachers collaborate each other. 4) teachers collaborated in diverse contexts and methods: in classrooms, playgrounds, teachers’ room and even the hallway formally and informally.

Collaboration methods that the participants described were the meetings, mentor system, peer observation, emails, chatting, and face book. These are all different ways to share knowledge and skills that may not otherwise be held in common across all the teachers who are from different academic backgrounds and in-service experiences. Note also, their differences sometimes caused conflicts between teachers but they always tried to solve as soon as possible employing various strategies made possible by being in the same program work place.
Data-based assertions are given in conclusion, and the implications of these assertions. In addition, recommendations for future study are made.
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CHAPTER 1

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

The issue of how infants and young children, both with and without special needs, play and learn together is gaining increased attention and support from a variety of sources. National and state regulations as well as professional organizations support a variety of initiatives that encourage and strengthen the capacity of early childhood education programs to serve all children regardless of their abilities. Recent figures show that 55 states and territories promote inclusive child care, 41 offer training to providers, and 12 fund inclusion specialist positions (NCCIC, 2008). The issue of inclusion is not simply a family advocacy issue as it was in the past. Rather the issue is front and center, spread on a national level by revisions in the law to provide free and appropriate education for children with and without special needs (Osgood, 2005).

The inclusion issue and its related research have evolved since the early 1970s when it was brought forth by professionals and families of children with special needs. At that time, the lack of a unified and systematic definition created misunderstandings and controversy. Since 1975 (PL 94-142), inclusion has attracted solid legislative backing, as seen in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), as well as attention from early childhood research publications. Recent research has focused on various topics. Five categories of pertinent studies on inclusion include: (1) the need for universal access, (2) benefits for all children, (3)
specialized instruction, (4) collaborations with parents and teachers, and (5) professional development, including pre-service and in-service trainings. These categories illustrate the scope of inclusion issues that show a trend toward a sharper focus on the quality of teachers in inclusive settings.

**Universal access**

The U.S. Department of Education (2005) and Guralnick (2001) reported that universal access to inclusive program for children with special needs is far from reality. Today in the U.S., approximately 50% of children with special needs below age five receive special services in an inclusive setting. Services vary by region; some areas of this country are doing well in this regard, but others lag far behind.

**Benefits for all**

Inclusion can benefit all children, with and without special needs, particularly in the area of social confidence with peers. Solid research evidence (Buysse, Goldman, & Skinner, 2002; Odom, Schwartz & ECRII Investigators, 2002; and Rafferty, Piscitelli, & Boettcher, 2003) shows that children enrolled in inclusive settings rather than self-contained settings make adequate progress in language and social confidence with peers. Limited evidence suggests inclusion does not benefit learning for typically developing children. In fact, inclusion likely helps these children develop tolerance and acceptance of the individual differences in their peers.
Specialized instruction

Odom, Vitztum, Wolery, Lieber, Sandall, Hanson, et al. (2004) and D’Allura (2002) pointed out that special instruction is a critical component of inclusion and a factor which affects children’s learning outcomes. There needs to be basic support for all children involving a high quality of environment, a focus on small group intervention, and individualized intervention for children with high levels of learning needs in inclusive classrooms.

Collaboration

Collaboration among parents, teachers, and specialists is a cornerstone of high quality inclusion (Hunt, Soto, Maier, Liboiron, & Bae, 2004; Odom, et al. 2004; Odom, Wolery, Lieber, & Horn, 2002). Legislative support for cross-sector collaboration exists. With New (2007) Head Start legislation, Congress required every state to create or designate a State Advisory Council to better coordinate early education and care services; the Higher Education Opportunity Act (2008) authorized state advisory councils on early childhood professional development and career systems to pull together the myriad stakeholders to create a coherent system.

Professional development

Evidence suggests that early childhood professionals may not be adequately prepared to serve young children with special needs enrolled in inclusive programs (Chang, Early, & Winton, 2005; Early & Winton, 2001). Maxwell,
Lim, and Early (2006) also reported that students in early childhood programs do not get adequate preparation for how to plan and implement professional development. The field of early childhood lacks consensus on the definition of professional development approaches such as consultation and coaching (Dinnebeil, Buysse, Rush, & Eggbeer, 2009; Maxwell, Field, & Clifford, 2005; Winton, 2006). Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005) and Whitehurst (2002) reported that the body of teacher education and professional development research addressing desirable outcomes is relatively small and inconclusive. Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace (2005) noted that workshops are effective for professional development if building skills is the desired outcome. In 2006, Winton also indicated that promising but unproven models of professional development include coaching, consultation, mentoring communities of practice, and different forms of peer study groups. A recent national survey also indicated that workshops were the primary method for delivering training and technical assistance (Bruder, Mogro-Wilson, Stayton, & Dietrich, 2009). There is certainly a movement toward promoting professional development to increase opportunities for high quality pre-school inclusion.

As these recent studies show, the issues of inclusion range from whether children with special needs are included or not in the same placement with typically developing children to teachers’ professional development and collaboration. This means that in the face of increased attention to early childhood inclusion, there is a concomitant need for empirical efforts to examine the who (cross-fields educators), what (the contents of
professional development) and how (collaborative team work) of working for children with and without special needs. According to Grace et al. (2008), the literature broadly identifies three factors in the successful inclusion of children with special needs into early childhood settings. (1) positive social interaction and engagement purposely facilitated by teachers; (2) collaborative teamwork among early childhood education (ECE) and special education (SPLED) educators; and (3) incorporation and empowerment of families as part of the decision-making team in the education of their children. All three factors are important to classroom quality involving both ECE and SPLED professionals.

Recently, university and college teacher preparation programs not only in ECE but also at other school-aged levels have begun including content related to the development of children with special needs, methods of curricular adaptation, and the importance of instilling in neophyte teachers positive attitudes and perceptions toward inclusion. For example, some schools such as the George Washington University have combined or joined programs in ECE and early childhood special education (ECSE) programs. As another example, eight states (CO, FL, ID, KA, KE, MA, NE, and WI) now require ECE and SPLED teachers to complete a single unified certification to work with children both with and without special needs (Muller, 2006). Accordingly, ECE and ECSE teacher educators need to find ways to work cooperatively and constructively to bridge the gap (Cavallaro & Haney, 1999).

Practical problems and barriers have prevented successful inclusion, and the most important of these is arguably related to teachers who deal directly with children with and without special needs. Few practicing regular education teachers or administrators have been prepared to work with non-typical children of any type (Bergen, 2003), and they are
often ill-prepared to work with special education teachers. Similarly, special educators typically have not had sufficient preparation in regular education curricula and methods, or in knowing how to serve as consultants and models for regular education teachers. Although the solutions to this matter are urgent for cultivating effective inclusion, not much research has been done on the matter. One reason for this inattention is that the two fields of study, while both concerned with inclusion, have their own points of view on how to study children with and without special needs. Additionally, teacher education in ECE and SPLED, which share certain commonalities, differ in having their own points of view as well on how to work with young children and families.

The academic merger of the fields of ECE and ECSE has occurred in response to issues of inclusion, but the practical side to this merger is still not very well fleshed out (Darragh, 2007). For example, each field’s text books and research often include the other’s topic as an addendum only, typically providing a chapter or so within texts and research papers. It is essential that both ECE and SPLED adapt each other’s educational materials without separating the needs of children with and without special needs in order to advance teachers’ collaborative team teaching in actual classroom settings. There is still, however, a great need for in-depth and sustained professional development initiatives for currently employed regular and special education teachers to promote successful inclusion in ECE classroom settings.

**Statement of Purpose**

This study focuses on the experiences of six teachers concerning their professional development and collaboration within an early childhood inclusive program
context. The teachers came from different academic backgrounds, but all did collaborative team work in an inclusive program. Research methods included individual and focus group interviews, observations and shadowing, and a study of documents. The spotlight was placed on cross-fields teachers’ development and collaborations.

It was hard to find research publications to match what a lot of educators currently talk about concerning experiences teaching children with and without special needs and working with other educators. A central purpose of this study is to share the perceptions and perspectives of current educators’ professional development and their collaborative team work in inclusive settings. The present research starts by relating these educators’ stories about their academic backgrounds, their teaching, and their relationships and collaborations with other educators. It also describes their understandings and perspectives on ECE and ECSE fields—that is, their understandings of each other’s field of study and work, and the way they collaborate with early childhood and special education teachers in inclusive classrooms based on interviews, observations, and field notes.

To accomplish the research and to describe the research questions effectively, this study employs the qualitative method. It adds to the literature on through in-depth interviews of both ECE and SPLED teachers and compares the results with established studies. This study uses two types of interviews (individual and focus), field notes, and relevant documents. The participants for this study are two experienced early childhood teachers (at least 3 to 5 years of teaching experience), two experienced special education (at least 3 to 5 years of teaching experience), and the administrator of a highly qualified child care center with inclusive classrooms. A fifth teacher was added as a participant at the end of this research; further details are in the chapter of ‘Portraits of the Participants’.
Four data sources are used for this study; (1) focus group interviews, (2) individual interviews of teachers and their administrators, (3) field notes based on the extensive observations in the inclusive classrooms and at teachers’ meetings after school, and (4) relevant documents. These four data sources provide the basis for this study. The data are examined, and categorized using the evidence from all data sources (Yin, 1994). Individual participants are the focus. A more detailed description of the method appears in chapter 3.

**Research Questions**

The guiding research question is: How much do early childhood and special early childhood educators in inclusive settings differ in their knowledge base and skills set concerning teaching children with and without special needs; how do they merge, if they do, in their mission to serve through collaborative team teaching in early childhood inclusive settings? Additional questions include:

RQ1. *Inclusion*: How do teachers perceive inclusion and their roles in inclusive programs?

1. What are the teachers’ personal definitions of inclusion and the barriers to practicing it?

2. What is the uniqueness of inclusion in each teacher’s site?

RQ2. *Cross –Filed Education*: How does the program practice ECE and SPLED for teaching children with and without special needs?

1. What are their understandings of each other’s fields of study?
2. How are the two fields similar and different, and how do they develop over time?

RQ3. Professional Development: How do teachers develop their knowledge and skills to meet the needs of children with varying abilities?

1. What did both early childhood and special education teachers learn from their pre-service trainings and their teaching experiences?

2. How do teachers’ preparations meet the reality of inclusion to match the rhetoric of good practice?

RQ4. Collaboration: How do teachers collaborate with other members in the program?

1. How do they cooperate each other given their different academic backgrounds, philosophical believes, and skills?

2. What challenges do teachers feel they are facing, and how do they respond to those challenges?

Significance of the Study

The Division for Early Childhood (DEC) issued a joint position statement on the inclusion of young children with special needs in typical early childhood environments, which the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) endorsed in 1993. The key concept in the position statement was ‘high quality.’ Both fields (ECE and ECSE) began to merge into ‘high quality of inclusive education’ in spite of their
differences on the meaning of inclusion, family involvement, assessment, individualized family service plans and individualized education program, curriculum and intervention, service delivery, and transition. In 2009, a revision of the joint position statement was developed in detail, stating that “Early childhood inclusion embodied the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and context as full members of families, communities, and society. The defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high quality early childhood programs and services are access, participation, and supports.” (NAEYC & DEC/CEC, 1993).

The joint position statement of 1993 was general and broad while the 2009 statement was more detailed. The earlier statement was primarily focused on the access of children with special needs placed with typically developing children. The 2009 statement includes the defining features (access, participation, and support) of high quality inclusion and stresses improving early childhood services. In 2007, the U.S. Department of Education indicated that the majority of states were making some progress in serving children with special needs in inclusive programs. Most states reported serving 50% or more of their preschoolers with special needs in general early childhood education programs. Given the growing number of inclusive early childhood programs that serve children with special needs, it is clear that access is in continual progress. In terms of participation and support, it is critical that professional development activities targeting both general and special educators incorporate quality inclusive practice in efforts to improve program quality. The access of children with special needs will also
increase when participation and support are achieved for children with and without special needs by cross-fields educators.

The issue of inclusion has attracted more attention and generated more controversy than how or what children are taught. However, there is a more critical issue than merely placing children with and without special needs in inclusive settings. The way in which teachers teach children with and without special needs is the key problematic issue in recent inclusive classrooms. There are differentiated cross-fields educators in inclusive settings and all of them are in charge of the education for children with and without special needs. The core of their educational backgrounds such as philosophy, knowledge, and skills for teaching children with and without special needs are different, making it difficult and complicated to use collaborative team teaching for successful inclusion. In addition, the issue of inclusion is a relatively new phenomenon. Not many teacher preparation programs are prepared to teach inclusive education, and not been much research has been done on this topic. Therefore, it seems the most appropriate way to learn collaboration for successful inclusion is through analyzing the experiences of those who are teaching in inclusive classrooms. This study provides direct and practical information for current and potential early childhood providers who are having difficulties understanding how to make inclusion work. This study meets the need for research on this topic by using empirical and practical current data, provides helpful data for future and current teachers in inclusive settings, and supports the important relationship between the quality of ECE and professional development.
First, much research has indicated the need for studying inclusion—specifically the resources of teachers who need knowledge and skills for children with and without special needs—as indicated by the following.

- Progress has been achieved in efforts to ensure to inclusive programs, particularly for young children (3-5 year olds). However, in the U.S., universal access to inclusive programs for all children with special needs is far a reality (Guralnick, 2001; McDonnell, Brownell, & Wolery, 1997; U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

- A variety of factors such as policies, resources, and beliefs influence the acceptance and implementation of inclusion (Cross, 2004; Devore & Hanley-Maxwell, 2000; Odom et al., 2004; Purcell, Horn, & Palmer, 2007, Wesley, Buysse, & Skinner, 2001).

- Specialized instruction is an important component of inclusion and a factor affecting child outcomes (D’Allura, 2002; Odom et al., 2004; Schwarz & Carta, 1996).

- Collaboration among parents, teachers, and specialists is a cornerstone of high quality inclusion (Hunt et al, 2004; Odom, Schwartz, & ECRII Investigators, 2002; Odom et al., 2004).

- Some evidence suggests that early childhood professionals may not be adequately prepared to serve young children with disabilities enrolled in inclusive programs (Chang, Early, & Winton, 2005; Dinnebeli et al., 1998; Early & Winton, 2001).
These studies have shown the need for inclusion. The most important resource for developing inclusion is those educators who interact with children the most closely. Also it is clear that collaboration is essential for teachers in inclusive classrooms to provide high quality education. None of those studies, however, have described the reality of inclusion in the early childhood education, although they have pointed out the need for legal support and reform of inclusion, as well as its advantages.

Next, this study investigated cross-fields professional development including questions about how much educators in ECE and ECSE differ in their knowledge, skills, and philosophy about providing appropriate teaching for children with and without special needs. Do they merge in one goal, ‘highly qualified’ inclusion, through collaborative team teaching in early childhood inclusive settings? This study diagnoses the present teacher preparation in ECE and ECSE and suggests new visions for future teachers who will work in inclusive settings. In addition, this study describes the successful factors of teachers’ collaborative team teaching for the potential or current teachers who are struggling in inclusive classrooms with other teachers or children with and without special needs.

The reality of the relationship between general education and special education is a hypersensitive matter for scholars of both general and special education. Bowe (2007) reported that ECE and ECSE professionals keep their philosophies and practices separate. In ECE, many general education textbooks cover teaching children with special needs, but the topic is usually included at the end of the textbooks or in an addendum. In the worst case scenario, professors may skip the last chapter due to time constraints or other reasons. In SPLED, on the other hand, textbooks typically do not cover general education
because of the number of different types of disabilities and interventions to study and most students are focusing on specific disabilities or interventions. Research methods also vary between ECE and SPLED. SPLED is more focused on interventions which increase or decrease problematic behaviors, but ECE focuses on environments and factors which change the problematic behaviors. This study advocates for a stronger connection between early childhood program quality and cross-filed educators’ professional development, with a particular focus on how this relates to their collaborative team work for children with and without special needs.

Finally, early childhood educators are being asked to develop a complex understanding of child development and early education issues and to provide rich and meaningful educational services for all children. Inclusion offers more knowledge and skills concerning children with special needs in particular. As such, both ECE and SPLED need well-conducted empirical studies that focus on educators. In this study, the researcher offers in-depth examinations of cross-fields educators having different academic backgrounds in ECE and ECSE, and looks at how cross-fields educators’ collaborative team work merges into ‘high quality’ inclusive education. The most significant aspect of this study is its description of current cross-fields educators’ professional development and their collaborations. This study retraces teachers’ professional development and their collaborations to propose the direction of ECE for potential educators to ensure high quality of the early childhood inclusion workforce.
Glossary of Terms

Early Childhood Inclusion

The DEC and the NAEYC’s joint position statement offers a definition of inclusion (April, 2009). Early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of abilities, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired result of inclusive experiences for children with and without special needs and their families includes a sense of belonging and membership, along with development and learning to reach their full potential. The defining features of inclusion that identify high quality early childhood programs and services are access, participation, and support. These are defined as follows.

Access means providing a wide range of activities and environments for every child by removing physical barriers and offering multiple ways to promote learning and development;

Participation means using a range of instructional approaches to promote engagement in play and learning activities, and a sense of belonging for every child;

Support refers to broader aspects of the system such as professional development, incentive for inclusion and collaboration among families and professionals to assure high quality inclusion.
**Cross-fields Educators**

The early childhood workforce constitutes a group of professionals who are widely diverse with respect to their professional titles (e.g., teachers, teaching assistants, care providers, paraprofessionals, disability specialists, consultants, technical assistant providers, family support providers, administrators) and their roles (e.g., family child care providers, friend and relative caregivers, specialists who deliver therapy to children with special needs regarding speech, occupational, physical, etc., Head Start component coordinators, and social workers and/or family workers). Broadly put, there are two types of professionals across all these various titles and roles; those who have general education backgrounds and those who have special education backgrounds. Currently each subsystem has a set of personal qualifications, different pathways for achieving them, and different delivery systems for preparation and continuing education.

**Professional Development in Early Childhood**

The definition of professional development for early childhood proposed by the National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI, 2008) is as follows.

The term professional development encompasses all types of facilitated learning opportunities, for example, those that result in college credit or degrees as well as those generally are less intensive and do not yield credits or degrees; those occur largely through formal coursework and those that are more informal and situated in practice. Professional development is facilitated teaching and learning experiences that are transactional and designed to support the acquisition of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions as well as the application of this
knowledge in practice. The key components of professional development include (a) the characteristics and contexts of the learners (i.e., the who of professional development, including the characteristics and contexts of the learners and the children and families they serve), (b) content (i.e., the what of professional development. What professionals should know and be able to do, generally defined by professional competencies, standards, and credentials), and (c) the organization and facilitation of learning experiences (i.e., the how of professional development. The approaches, models, or methods used to support self-directed, experientially oriented learning that is highly relevant to practice).

**Collaboration**

People commonly use cooperation, coordination, and collaboration when discussing interpersonal relationships. Although these three terms are used similarly, they are actually a continuum from cooperation to coordination and then to collaboration, moving from lower intensity to higher intensity. Intensity includes risk, time needed, and opportunity. The process is called the Collaboration Continuum, and the definitions are as follows (Kagan, 1991).

*Cooperation:* Shorter-term informal relations that exist without any clearly defined mission, structure, or planning effort characterize cooperation only about the subject at hand. Each organization retains separate so virtually no risk exists.

*Coordination:* More formal relationships and understanding of missions distinguish coordination. People involved in a coordinative effort focus their longer-term interaction around a specific effort or program. Coordination requires
some planning and division of roles and opens communication channels between organizations. White authority still rests with individual organizations, everyone’s risk increases. Power can be an issue. Resources are made available to participants and rewards are shared.

*Collaboration:* A more durable and pervasive relationship marks collaboration. Participants bring separate organizations into a new structure with full commitment to a common mission. Such relationships require comprehensive planning and well-defined communication channels operating on all levels. The collaborative structure determines authority, and risk is much greater because each partner contributes its resources and reputation. Power is an issue and can be unequal. Partners pool or jointly secure the resources, and share the results and rewards.

*Children with Special Needs*

The terms used to describe children vary. For example, we have children with and without disabilities, or with and without special needs. This study uses children with and without special needs rather than children with and without disabilities because it has a more broad and inclusive meaning. Every young child in a sense, whether has disability or not, is impaired physically or emotionally in some way. Even when children do not have a label, they may suffer difficulties in certain places or circumstances, and may also need help. Moreover, the term of children with and without special needs is too simple since it fails to include children include bilingual children, children impaired by poverty,
and other such complicating conditions. Each child is unique and compels and must be described in multiple terms, and must be viewed as a person from many vantage points.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature related to the four key topics of this study: (1) early childhood inclusion, (2) cross-fields educators, (3) professional development, and (4) collaboration. First, the definition of inclusion is given, and issues related to inclusion are discussed briefly. Controversial issues surrounding inclusion are explored. For each of the two relevant fields (ECE and ECSE, or special education), pre-service is analyzed, including cross-fields educators or those who teach in inclusive settings other than ECE or ECSE teachers. Finally, research on teacher collaboration from different backgrounds, and their conflicts/resolution are reviewed in this chapter. Figure 1 shows the framework and structure of the literature review.
Figure 1. Literature Review Map
Early Childhood Inclusion

The Definition and the Policy Advisory

Two federal laws (IDEA and Section 504) govern the education of children with special needs; Section 504 is less frequently used, largely superceded by IDEA, regarding access to public education for children with special needs (Smith, 2001). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) does not require inclusion, but the law requires that children with special needs be educated in the ‘least restrictive environment appropriate’ to meet their individual needs. IDEA requires school districts to have a continuum of placements available, extending from the regular education classroom to residential settings, in order to accommodate the needs of all children with special needs. Using the continuum concept makes it more likely that each child will be placed appropriately in an environment that is specially suited to meet his/her needs.

There has been much argument about what inclusion should mean with regard to children with special needs, but there is now a growing consensus about how it should be defined. In the past, inclusion was a narrow sense of ‘placement,’ which referred to full-inclusion in mainstream classrooms, resource room models, and self-contained classrooms. After many years of argument, there is now wide-spread agreement that inclusion is not about a placement at all (Tutt, 2007), but rather that it describes a process which happens in a classroom with teachers, peers, and environments. The term ‘inclusion’ has been variously defined by authors and scholars, and there are many analogous terms for it such as integration and mainstreaming. Inclusion is distinguished from mainstreaming in that children are members of the general education class and do not belong to any other separate, specialized environment based on characteristics of their
disabilities (Halvorsen, 2009). Inclusion refers to the question of membership in the general education classroom community with appropriate services for individual’s needs, not to the time spent within general education. Inclusion includes all provision, not only means that placements like integration and mainstreaming referred with limited characteristic. In the UK, Nutbrown and Clough (2006) asked 182 teachers to define inclusion as it applied to their own early childhood settings. Typical examples of such definition included;

- *Inclusion is treating every child as an individual (regardless of their difficulty) and seeking knowledge and understanding from outside organizations, e.g. courses that are available, and we need guidance on an individual basis. Ideally, we could use continued support so that we can continue to meet the needs of each child with learning difficulties;*
- *Inclusion is striving to include all children within a setting which celebrate the differences in all children-with the help, support and guidance of the child, parents and other professionals. We should meet the needs of each individual child and enable them to fulfill their potential in all areas of learning; and Inclusion means ensuring everyone works together in the child’s best interests to enable them to reach their full potential-EVERYONE!*

Inclusion is not specifically defined by law, but together the requirements support it in three areas; Placement of the child with typically developing children, the child’s participation in the standard educational or developmental curriculum, and participation in typical non-academic activities (Connect, 2009). The DEC and NAEYC’s joint
position statement asserts that the defining features of inclusion which can be used to identify high quality early childhood programs and services are access, participation, and supports (DEC/NAEYC, 2009). According the joint position statement, *access* means providing a wide range of activities and environments for every child by removing physical barriers and offering multiple ways to promote learning and development; *participation* means using a range of instructional approaches to promote engagement in play and learning activities, and a sense of belonging for every child; and *support* refers to broader aspects of the system such as professional development, incentive for inclusion and collaboration among families and professionals to assure high quality inclusion.

The following DEC/NAEYC (2009) recommendations describe how the joint position statement can be used by professionals to shape practices and influence policies related to inclusion.

1. *Create high expectations for every child, regardless of ability, to reach his or her full potential.*

2. *Develop a program philosophy on inclusion to ensure shared assumptions and beliefs about inclusion, and to identify quality inclusive practices.*

3. *Establish a system of services and supports that reflects the needs of children with varying types of disabilities and learning characteristics, with inclusion as the driving principle and foundation for all of these services and supports.*

4. *Revise program and professional standards to incorporate key dimensions of high quality inclusion.*
5. **Improve professional development across all sectors of the early childhood field by determining the following:** who would benefit from professional development on inclusion; what practitioners need to know and be able to do in inclusive settings; and what methods are needed to facilitate learning opportunities related to inclusion.

6. **Revise federal and state accountability systems to reflect both the need to increase the number of children with disabilities enrolled in inclusive programs as well as to improve the quality and outcomes of inclusion.**

Compared to earlier studies and the original joint position statement, recent studies and the revised joint position statement have evolved from the focus on access to more focus on participation and support. According to Osgood (2005), in earlier years, the inclusion debates focused on the propriety of segregating or integrating children with special needs in regular classroom settings. ‘Do these children with special needs belong there? If not, why not?’ However, the scope of the debate began to expand beyond individual classrooms and schools to include reconsiderations of the comprehensive structures of special education and of its relationships with general education. Osgood also mentioned that within the past twenty years, the debate has included references to a fully inclusive general education system that provides a free and appropriate education for all children in the regular classroom regardless of their abilities. However, prior to debating those issues, we need to recognize a simple element that many studies are overlooking who makes the inclusion feasible and appropriate for children with and without special needs.
Support for the Quality Early Childhood Inclusion in the U.S.

Although the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) reported in 2005 that universal access to inclusive programs for all children with special needs is far from a reality in the U.S., many states and territories have initiated activities to promote inclusive child care. According to NCCIC (National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center, May 2008), 55 states and territories promote inclusive child care, 41 offer training to providers, 27 provide technical assistance, 25 participate in cross-system planning/coordination, 12 fund inclusion specialist positions, 11 develop resource materials, 9 fund health/mental, health/nurse consultant positions, and 5 provide adaptive equipment.

The following examples of specific state initiatives are meant to represent a range of approaches taken to strengthen the capacity of early care programs to serve children with special needs.

1. **Illinois, training initiative.** SpecialCare Outreach is a statewide training program offered through the Illinois Training Network. Child care resource and referral agencies assist locally by coordinating training sessions. The goal is to increase providers’ knowledge and level of comfort so that they become more willing and able to extend their traditional roles to care for children with special needs. The training also helps providers meet the state’s Department of Children and Family services’ licensing standards which require training in inclusive child care.

2. **Florida, technical assistance initiative.** The Lead Agency coordinates with the state’s DOE to offer the Technical Assistance and Training System (TATS), a statewide project to support programs that serve prekindergarten children with
special needs by providing training and technical assistance. Regional facilities in settings with typically developing peers, evaluation and assessment, research-based curriculum and instruction, and training services from prekindergarten to kindergarten. The collaboration of TATS facilitators and early learning coalitions’ inclusion specialists is an ongoing effort to meet the needs of school districts and private early learning providers throughout the state.

3. *Pennsylvania, cross-system planning and coordination initiative.* The Department of Public Welfare’s Early Childhood Professional Development System works collaboratively with the Early Intervention Technical Assistance network to ensure that sufficient training opportunities exist across the state and are coordinated to prevent duplication. Pennsylvania is developing a management information system to track child outcomes, including services to children with disabilities in inclusive settings.

4. *Wisconsin, resource materials initiative.* The Child Care Information Center (CCIC) makes inclusive child care materials available for parents, providers, instructors, and other professionals through its statewide library and resource clearinghouse. Its media campaign, ‘Together-Children Grow,’ has produced posters, books, and brochures to promote inclusive activities and can be accessed through CCIC. The materials promote four components of quality inclusive settings; staff education, accessible buildings, program accommodations, and disability-specific services and resources. A display of materials is available for conferences.
5. **Georgia, inclusive specialists’ initiative.** An inclusion coordinator is on staff at each of the child care resource and referral agencies as provided in the state contract, Bright from the Start. Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. These coordinators are responsible for providing services to families who have children with special needs and the providers who care for them. The coordinators continually promote inclusive child care through training, drop-in visits to child care programs, and meetings in their community.

6. **Massachusetts, health or mental health consultant initiative.** The Lead Agency co-administers the Comprehensive Mental Health for Child Care Project to ensure that contracted child care providers have comprehensive onsite mental health services available to children and mental health clinics participating in the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership. Child care programs and mental health clinics jointly hire clinicians to provide a broad range of training and support to children, their families, and child care staff beyond the billable therapeutic and assessment services that clinicians normally provide.

7. **Oregon, Partnership in Inclusive Care (PIC)** is a training program designed to increase the number of regulated child care providers caring for children with special needs. In 2005, eight people from five Oregon communities were trained to provide Teaching Research Assistance to Childcare (TRAC) providers with an inclusion curriculum developed at Western Oregon University. TRAC is designed to give providers information and skills to increase their ability to serve children with special needs. An additional eight trainers were sponsored in the second
cohort in 2006. Participants in the local trainings are linked to other community resources that support inclusive child care. Examples of linked resources include consultation, mentoring, technical assistance, and financial assistance.

**Cross-fields Education**

Since early childhood inclusion is for children with and without special needs, there must be professionals capable of meeting their needs in various ways. To meet the different types and different intensities of needs, these professionals must also have different knowledge and skills for dealing with each child. Neither ECE nor SPLED educators alone can meet the challenge of all those children with and without special needs. Therefore, they need to work nearby each other to cultivate and provide appropriate education.

The fields of ECE and ECSE have been engaged in parallel play for a much longer time than is developmentally appropriate (Cavallaro & Haney, 1999). Although there have been significant and increasing bids for attention from each to the other, both fields of study need the skills to move from parallel to cooperative interaction. It is important to review the fields of ECE and ECSE (or SPLED) before mentioning this cooperative interaction such as the uniqueness of each field of study, the similarities and the differences between the two fields.
Early Childhood Education (ECE) & Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

McLean and Odom (1993) identified seven themes that illustrate the similarities and differences between ECE and ECSE practices.

1. **Inclusion.** Both ECE and ECSE practice refer to the individual appropriateness and age appropriateness of strategies to use with young children with disabilities. The DEC (1993) stated that inclusion is a concept associated with young children having special needs, supporting the basic right of all young children to full and active engagement in their communities. However, there is also a different point of view on inclusion. The DEC recommended practices identifies inclusionary programs as place holders on the continuum of service delivery models and recognizes that families will choose which setting is optimum and most natural for them. ECE’s Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) is viewed as appropriate for all young children, including those children with special needs.

2. **Family involvement.** This is an area in which the practices that ECE and ECSE support differ in relation to emphasis. Both practices address and support family involvement. However, ECE puts more value on the importance of communication between families and child care providers as well as strategies to support this communicative link, while ECSE is more strongly focused on family centeredness and family and child advocacy to support the family’s active role in the assessment and intervention processes.

3. **Assessment.** Both ECE and ECSE recommend that assessment be used for instructional planning, identification of children with special needs, and program
evaluation. Both require that assessments have purpose and result in benefits for the child and family. Both support the use of socio-ecologically valid assessment procedures and the right of families’ access to all assessment information related to themselves and their child. However, ECSE gives more specific consideration to a systematic set of procedures for information gathering. The use of assessment has a broader range in ECSE and includes screening, eligibility, program planning, monitoring, and evaluation. Moreover, ECSE provides additional guidelines to determine the acceptability of assessment materials and the use of family information related to concerns and priorities as a guide to planning the assessment.

4. *Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP) and Individualized Education Programs (IEP).* In both ECE and ECSE recommended practices, the purpose of an IFSP/IEP is to specifically tailor education programs. However, the difference between practices lies in the level of specificity. ECE professionals pay attention to the diverse needs of the children whom the program serves using a curriculum that incorporates continual planning, implementation, and assessment. ECSE’s IFSP must specifically address family priorities, concerns, and resources and include desired outcomes for the children and their families. An IEP provides precise goals and objectives for the child as well as a plan for achieving them and monitoring progress toward them. Each IFSP or IEP is developed by a team whose composition reflects the families’ identified concerns and resources.
5. *Curriculum and intervention.* ECE and ECSE practices demonstrate a joint perspective in recommending that curricular strategies. (a) meet the needs of a wide range of children, (b) engage and support positive relationships with members of the child’s family, (c) are meaningful and functional for the child and the child’s family, (d) actively support the engagement of young children with their environment, and (e) support children’s physical concerns. The primary difference between the two fields of practice is the attention given to process and outcomes. ECE supports a focus on the cognitive and psychological processes that a child experiences. ECSE, however, promotes a greater emphasis on learning outcomes as demonstrated by a child’s performance of a developmental skill.

6. *Service delivery.* ECE identifies environments that are nurturing, safe, and accessible for young children and that meet the physical needs and support the development of young children. On the other hand, ECSE promotes an expansion of typical ECE and community environments, such as foster care homes, hospitals and so forth.

7. *Transition.* Both ECE’s and ECSE’s transition practices identify strategies for supporting young children and their families as they move among programs, services, and environments. However, for young children with special needs, a strong emphasis is placed on formal interagency agreements and well-planned transition programs that use precise steps and procedures.

The early childhood field comprises many diverse branches with diverse knowledge and skills. All can learn from each other in the quest to educate all young children
successfully in inclusive environments. As Bredekamp and Rosegrant stated, “It is clear that each field needs to learn from the other as we work closely together to ensure individually appropriate practice for each child” (1992, p93). Both fields need to accept that there is no one right way to provide appropriate, high quality inclusive early childhood education. The guiding paradigm is not ‘either-or’ but ‘both-and’ (Johnson et al., 1998). Each child changes in unique ways depending on the child’s developmental level and particular characteristics, and both contribute to how the child changes over time. This perspective emphasizes the importance to program planning, child care, and education practices of both the individual differences among children and the developmental age of children (Bredekamp, 1991; Johnson & Johnson, 1992).

Implementation of developmentally and individually appropriate practices, then, requires knowledge of individual children, their families, and the nature of specific developmental tasks and contexts, as well as appreciation of the variety of ECE and ECSE practices.

**Practices within the field of ECE & ECSE**

**Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) and Developmentally and Individually Appropriate Practice (DIAP)**

Although ECE and ECSE have developed different ways of thinking about how young children develop and how their programs should respond to individual child’s needs, both professions serve the same population of children. One characteristic of both groups is significant in contrast. Early ECE interpretation of reform differed from that of ECSE’s interpretation in that the ECE curriculum focused on placing only the child (instead of both the child and the child’s family) at the center of the curriculum. The
practice of placing the child and the child’s family at the center of the curriculum became
the central theme of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP). The NAEYC position
statement on DAP provided a sound theoretical foundation for opposing an emphasis on
academics in programs for young children. This emphasis on DAP in ECE focused
attention on the child rather than on the child’s family. The conflict between DAP and
applied behavioral methods prevalent in ECSE programs have created some substantial
differences in the orientation of ECE and ECSE teachers.

There are differences between the ECE and ECSE fields that must be addressed if
the two groups are to move toward a unified vision. Although there are no differences in
their best practices (Thrope, 1992), there are still fundamental differences related to
child-centered versus family-centered services and the impact of variations in
development on the child’s disposition to explore (Johnson & Carr, 1996). At this point,
we investigate DAP to see how ECE and ECSE were originally different from and similar
to one another.

In 1987, the NAEYC articulated a set of procedures and guideline related to DAP
in ECE programs (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). It identified DAP as resulting from the
process of professional making decision about the well-being and education of children
based on at least three important kinds of information or knowledge.

1. What is known about child development and learning-knowledge of age-related
human characteristics that permits general predictions within an age range about
what activities, materials, interactions, or experiences will be safe, healthy,
interesting, achievable, and also challenging to children;
2. What is known about the strengths, interests, and needs of each individual child in the group to be able to adapt for and be responsive to inevitable individual variation; and

3. Knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which children live to ensure that learning experiences are meaningful, relevant, and respectful for the participating children and their families.

DAP required teachers to integrate the many dimensions of their knowledge base. They must know about child development and the implications of this knowledge for how to teach, the content of the curriculum (what to teach and when) how to access what children have learned, and how to adapt curriculum and instruction to children’s individual strengths, needs, and interests. Moreover, they must know the particular children they teach and their families, as well as be knowledgeable about social and cultural contexts. NAEYC’s revised position statement is explicit in applying DAP to all children. Just as knowledge of individual variation must be used in making decisions about typically developing children, so too must knowledge of typical child development be used in providing services for children with special needs (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

In 1991, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) published DEC recommended practices for ECSE programs serving young children with special needs and their families. Across both DAP and DEC recommended practices, there has been a tendency to steer away from dogmatic proclamations that specifically identify the best practice for any given ECE or ECSE program. This perspective is based on the belief that
each program serving young children and families is unique because of the nature of the children and families, in addition to each program having its own unique characteristics. From this perspective, Developmentally and Individually Appropriate Practices (DIAP) have emerged. DIAP extend the concepts articulated by the NAEYC to include an emphasis on the individual characteristics and needs of young children with special needs (LaMontagne, Danbom, & Buchana, 1998).

Implementation of DIAP, then, requires knowledge of individual children, their families, and the nature of specific developmental tasks and contexts, as well as an appreciation of the variety of ECE and ECSE practices (LaMontagne, Danbom, & Buchana, 1998). Understanding points of congruence and tension in planning education programs appropriate for diverse groups of learners is essential for successful collaboration in inclusive education. The authors stated that the cornerstone of DIAP is the teacher’s ability to build and maintain significant relationships with children, families, and professionals. Teachers play a crucial role in supporting the development of young children in family, child care, and early education environments.

**Universal Design for ECE (UCECE)**

A primary concern of teachers, parents, and professionals for children with special needs is how to best include children with varying developmental needs. UCECE provides an organizing framework for synthesizing the fields of ECE and ECSE. At the core of UDECE are the concepts of inclusion and flexibility (Darragh, 2007). Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (1979) provides a theoretical rationale for UDECE through its focus on a child’s changing biology and the impact of social and
cultural contexts on this changing biology. Based on Bronfenbrenner’s work, UDECE includes the following foundational components.

1. Children, families, and professionals have diverse needs and goals. Each early childhood professional, child, and family brings to the early childhood environment a variety of needs, preferences, strengths, and ways of viewing and interacting with the world. Further, each individual professional, family, and community have diverse needs and goals regarding the care and education of young children;

2. Classroom communities have diverse needs and goals. Each classroom community is as the children who inhabit it, and therefore presents diverse needs, challenges, and strengths;

3. The field of early childhood education has diverse needs and goals. The uniqueness that children, families, and professionals bring to early childhood education creates the need for a field that is flexible and diverse in both its offerings as well as its professional opportunities;

4. Community, society, and culture have diverse needs and goals. The social and cultural context that early childhood education occurs within is shaped by politics, economics, expectations, and standards for the education of children.

Each of these components relates to the inclusion of all children within early childhood environments. Bergen (2003) addressed, however, the limitations regarding the present context of professional education practices for the inclusion of children with special
needs. These limitations include the segregation of the fields of ECE and ECSE that supports the diversity of children’s needs and abilities within its foundation, thereby establishing a common ground from which shared understanding and expertise, teaching and curricular practices, and inclusion can occur.

Conn-Powers et. al (2006) applied the principles of Universal Design and Universal Design for Learning to the field of ECE. The objective for applying this framework was to design early education programs to meet the needs of all learners in a common setting and thus begin to move away from specialized programs. A main goal of the Conn-Powers framework is equitable access, and its central premise is the creation of early education programs that engage and support all children. In addition to the Conn-Powers framework, UDECE (Darragh, 2007) extended this work through focus on access and equity for children, families, and professionals. The five components of UDECE include.

1. **Children need multiple means of access to high quality early childhood care and education** – To access high quality care and education in environments that respect and welcome them and meet their individual needs.

2. **The field of ECE needs to provide multiple means of representation** – multiple means of representation argues that learners require many different methods of acquiring information and knowledge. In the field of ECE, this means materials and programs provide children with varied ways to explore and process information, including vision, hearing, or the sense of touch. On the other hand, in the field of ECSE, it refers to the numerous programs, philosophies, and
educational approaches in the field, which result in a broad array of programmatic structures and appropriate practices for children to grow and develop within.

3. *Children need multiple means of engagement* – UDECE focuses on the creation of appropriate environments and curricular that they encourage children’s overall development and support the developmental needs of the classroom community as a whole.

4. *Children need multiple means of expression* – UDECE’s focus becomes assessment and documentation practices that support the demonstration of changes in children’s development and learning over time. For each child needs for expression are unique, and therefore, varied assessment strategies support acquiring knowledge of individual needs.

5. *Experiences that support accountability for equity and success are necessary in the field of ECE* – Equity means success within the context of larger societal goals, and experiences that support equity, therefore, are accountable to the larger society. Success means that the field of ECE must meet the needs of children, as well as meet state and national goals for children’s development and learning. At the most basic level, equity and accountability are human respect that respect for children, respect for parents, respect for professionals, and respect for each person’s uniqueness.

The facet of the UDECE model that relates to children, and build from the needs of children provides a common ground for ECE and ECSE to move forward together.
The needs of children do not exist in isolation. For the learning and development of all children to be supported, careful attention must be paid to the needs of individual families as well as the needs of professionals working with young children (Darragh, 2007). In addition, according to Darragh, UDECE’s framework provides a template for families and professionals, and the concepts of inclusion and flexibility can be equally applied to these parties.

Professional Development (PD)

Teacher preparation program

The early education teacher’s role increased with the movement toward inclusion. Early childhood educators of cross-sectors (e.g., Head Start, Pre-K, child care center) are likely to have at least one child with special needs in their classrooms (Chang, Early, & Winton, 2005). In 1997, McDonnell, Brownell and Wolery indicated that almost 60% of preschool teachers had a child with special needs in their classroom. That percentage is likely higher now, as research commonly indicates that the number of children with special needs being served in regular classrooms has increased steadily over the last 15 years (Buysse & Hollingsworth, 2009). This dramatic increase in the number of children with special needs being served with typically developing children suggests a need to reappraise overall early childhood teacher preparation with respect to content and experiences related to ECSE.

Chang, Early, & Winton (2005) noted that early childhood teacher preparation programs vary in the degrees that are offered. Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Science (AS), and Associate in Applied Science (AAS). Depending on the program, the
amount of course work and practicum required in the area of ECSE might differ. ECSE
teacher preparation programs that are not significantly different from early childhood
education from other school levels; therefore, general SPLED programs are reviewed
here. The purpose of this section is to describe the extent to which each teacher
preparation program uses content from the other’s area of expertise as part of their core
courses and practicum requirements.

1. Early Childhood Teacher Preparation program

- Associate of Applied Science (AAS, 2-year Institution of Higher Education, Fall
  2009)

ECE provides children with a sound foundation in theoretical and practical
aspects of early care and education settings. The curriculum establishes strengths in oral
and written communication, problem solving, and evaluation skills. Students will have an
understanding of the physical, social, and psychological factors that influence a child’s
development in a particular cultural environment. Fieldwork experiences provide students
an opportunity to work directly with young children, drawing upon the principles and
professional practices covered in the course work. The career opportunities for graduates
are childcare Director, group supervisor, assistant group supervisor, Head Start teacher,
Head Start assistant teacher, Head Start home visitor, teacher’s aide, house parent, child
casework’s aide, assistant teacher, family day care home operator, and group day care
home operator.
A graduate of this program should be able to;

1. Apply principles of psychology, sociology, mathematics, communication, and natural science to personal and career situations.

2. Identify indicators and norms/milestones of typical and atypical child development: cognitive, language, psycho-social, and motor.

3. Understand the interrelationship of the developmental domains (physical, emotional, and cognitive), and apply this knowledge.

4. Apply knowledge of child development and methodological approaches to create healthy, respectful, supportive and challenging learning environments for all young children, in the cultural contexts.

5. Understand and demonstrate the skills and strategies necessary for developing positive interpersonal relationships that support and empower children and their families.

6. Understand the goals, benefits, and responsible uses of assessment.

7. Plan, implement, and adapt, developmentally appropriate activities for all young children, with sensitivity to individuals’ needs, by using a variety of techniques and materials that encompass aesthetics, creativity, and a sound knowledge of child development.

8. Identify and access appropriate children’s services and community resources to better serve and advocate for young children and their families.
9. Use developmentally appropriate guidance techniques to support constructive behaviors, promote development, and encourage positive relationships.

10. Establish and maintain responsible practices for promoting childhood health, safety, and nutrition.

11. Comply with a varied of legal and organizational regulations, policies, ethical guidelines, and program standards associated with the provision of early childhood education services, including proper report and document preparation.

12. Continually develop and act a personal philosophy of pedagogy that guides interactions with children, staff, colleagues, families, and community, using the ethical guidelines and standards of the early childhood profession.

The following set of courses is designed to lead to the establishment of these competencies. Four semesters of coursework are provided.
Table 1. Coursework in an AAS Program

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<tr>
<td>EDU 101 Introduction to Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSS 124 Information, Technology, and Society</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDU 262 Language Arts in Early Children Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDU 125 Methods and Materials for Early Childhood Education I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSY 210 Child Psychology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDU 201 Health, Safety, and Nutrition for Early Childhood</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENL 121 English Composition II</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENL 201 Technical and Professional Communication</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTH Mathematics Elective</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Third Semester</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDU 211 Observation and Assessment with Young Children</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDU 225 Methods and Materials for Early Childhood Education II</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDU 268 Methods and Materials for Infants and Toddlers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC 111 Introduction to Sociology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC 231 Marriage and the Family</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPC 101 Fundamentals of Speech</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPC 201 Interpersonal Communication</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIT 204 First Aid, Responding to Emergencies</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fourth Semester</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EUD 256 Early Childhood Practicum</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDU 230 Young Children with Special Needs</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDU Education Elective</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSR 240 Management and Administration in Human Services</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OEA Open Elective</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCI Science Elective</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Associate of Science (AS, 4-Year Institution of Higher Education, Fall, 2009)

The primary goal of ECE for the Bachelor of Science Education degree is to provide a comprehensive contemporary program of teacher preparation and education for
early childhood settings. This goal is accomplished through objectives which provide students with opportunities in reflective thinking for personal and professional growth.

Graduates of the program will be able to:

1. Design and organize learning environments which facilitate the academic success.
2. Design learning environments that reflect teacher awareness of child, child development and the importance of peer interactions.
3. Implement classroom management strategies which promote a positive and cooperative learning environment.
4. Demonstrate mastery of the basic concepts, principles that form the bases for successfully implementing a comprehensive curriculum.
5. Demonstrate the ability to comprehensive and work collaboratively with a variety of audiences, including parents, family members, related service professionals, instructional assistants, as well as hospitals, and community agency staff.
6. Select and design appropriate assessment tools to monitor program effectiveness including but not limited to measures of child achievement, parent/family satisfaction and self-assessment of teacher performance.
7. Demonstrate the appropriate use of a variety of individually determined instructional strategies that incorporate technology designed to assist and support acquisition and performance of curricular skills.
8. Show evidence of reflective thinking to continued professional growth.
9. Demonstrate the ability to articulate a rationale for inclusive education supporting statements with research results and legal citations.

10. Apply the standards of professional ethics in school settings.

The following courses are designed to lead to the establishment of these competencies.

Table 2. Coursework in an AS Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course #</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ECE 250</td>
<td>Orientation to Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE 251</td>
<td>Curriculum in Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE 252</td>
<td>Infant/Toddler Curriculum</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE 299</td>
<td>Practicum for Infants/Toddlers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE 352</td>
<td>Methods in Early Childhood Education I-social science</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE 353</td>
<td>Communication Skills in Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE 354</td>
<td>Play Theory, Creativity &amp; Aesthetics in Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE 355</td>
<td>Methods in Early Childhood Education I- math and science</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE 490</td>
<td>Students Teaching in Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE 494</td>
<td>Student Teaching Seminar in Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESP 470</td>
<td>Orientation to Early Childhood Special Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESP 473</td>
<td>Curriculum Development in Early Childhood Special Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESP 474</td>
<td>Strategies of Teaching Young Children with Disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESP 475</td>
<td>Developmental Assessment in early Childhood Special Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESP 483</td>
<td>Parent Teacher Interaction in Special Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD 102</td>
<td>Human Growth and Development</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDA 300</td>
<td>Laws in ECE</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG 250</td>
<td>Children’s Literature</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPY 303</td>
<td>Educational Psychology</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPY 451</td>
<td>Test and Measurement</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPY 452</td>
<td>Counseling in Education</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICG 334</td>
<td>Computers in Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICG 380</td>
<td>Valuing Cultural Diversity</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elective</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>124-126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In an ECE program, students gain knowledge and skills for variety of careers in education and intervention for young children with and without special needs in classrooms, home-based programs, community education programs, and early intervention programs. Students will develop skills for working not only with typically
developing children and their families, but also with children having special needs and their families. However, neither 2-year nor 4-year ECE programs mentioned collaboration relationships with ECSE teachers. Usually, general ECE programs include some Special Education courses, but the program still needs more mutual, reciprocal relationships with the special education field directly.

2. Special Education Teacher Preparation Program (Fall, 2009)

Unlike general ECE programs, there is no distinction of levels for children in SPLED courses. Special education does not classify early, elementary, middle, or higher level of children in program names. Rather, it includes courses that focus on the level of children. Therefore, students choose SPLED courses by their interests in children’s age-level and variety of disabilities. Most special education instruction is at the elementary, middle, and secondary school levels, although some work with infants and toddlers.

All states require teachers to be licensed, indicating the completion of a special education teacher training program and at least a bachelor’s degree, though many states require a master’s degree (United States Department of Labor, 2009). According to the CEC, to become a special education teacher, students must obtain the appropriate credentials. They can attend a regular university to obtain bachelor’s degree or follow an alternative route to obtain special education certification.

The goal of the program is an educational system in which families, communities, and educators share responsibility and commitment for preparing future citizens to live independent, responsible, productive, and personally satisfying lives to the fullest extent of their capabilities in our evolving society. There are four mission statements in pursuit of the goal;
1. To have a positive influence on the inclusion of persons who are culturally, physically or intellectually diverse in the mainstream of American life;

2. To provide national leadership in the development and sharing of new knowledge in special education;

3. To develop the next generation of college and university faculty in special education; and

4. To develop teachers who can apply the current knowledge of effective practice in special education.

A Bachelor of Science degree in special education provides a program focused on the knowledge and supervised practice applicable to children and youth with disabilities. Thirteen major tasks identified as essential in any program designed to train teacher, include; 1) diagnosis and identification of relevant characteristics of learners, 2) specification of instructional/behavioral objectives, 3) task analysis, 4) selection, modification, and use of instructional materials, 5) selection and use of instructional strategies, 6) evaluation of pupil progress, 7) utilization of resources, 8) behavior management, 9) individualized instruction, 10) parents involvement, 11) professional activities, 12) knowledge of contemporary trends, and 13) teaching in content area.

During the first four semesters, students should complete as many of the university’s general education requirements as possible. Courses other than special education prescribed by the program must also be completed. The following courses are prescribed in the special education B.S. program. A total of 125 credits (66 credits for 1st
to 4th semesters and 62 credits for 5th to 8th Semesters) are needed to complete the SPLED program and be recommended for Pennsylvania certification in Mentally and/or Physically Handicapped. The following sections provide a generally accurate description of the current program.

Table 3. Coursework in a SPLED Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course #</th>
<th>1st to 4th Sem.</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MATH 200GQ</td>
<td>Problem Solving in mathematics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDPSY 101GQ</td>
<td>Statistical Data Hybrid</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KINES 303GHA</td>
<td>Emergency Care-First Aid/Safety/AED</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSY 2</td>
<td>Learning and Instruction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSY 213</td>
<td>Educational Theory and Policy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HD FS 129GS</td>
<td>Introduction to Human Development and Family</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Semester</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPLED 425</td>
<td>Orientation to Human Variation and SPLED</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPLED 395W</td>
<td>Observing in Exceptional Settings</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPLED 401</td>
<td>Motivation Exceptional Learners</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPLED 404/402/Elec.</td>
<td>Working with Families and Professionals in SPLED</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSYS 400</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Semester</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPLED 411</td>
<td>Intervention for Students with Severe Disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPLED 412</td>
<td>Instruction for students with Mild Disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPLED 495E</td>
<td>Experience with Exceptional Children</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPLED 454</td>
<td>Assessment for Instruction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Semester</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elect./SPLED 404</td>
<td>Working with Families and Professionals in SPLED</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Semester</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPLED 409</td>
<td>Curriculum for students with Special Needs</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPLED 495G</td>
<td>Experience with an Integrated Inclusion Classroom</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPLED 404/402/Elec.</td>
<td>Human Right: Historical and Current Issues in SPLED (402)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KINES 402</td>
<td>Physical Activities for Children in SPLED</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPLED 495F</td>
<td>Practicum in SPLED</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These programs are just examples of many ECE and ESCE programs in community colleges and universities. The courses described may not be exactly the same from school to school, but they are not much different. The point here is to look closely at
what is different and what is similar across the programs in ECE and ECSE, and to analyze what they need to improve their programs for successful inclusive teaching. Naturally, both programs have in common the in teaching of students; however, there are more differences than similarities so far, just by looking at their program goals and coursework. Are they learning to teach different children? No, students will teach in the same settings with same children but different needs.

What remains for these programs to generate success in teaching children with and without special needs? Collaboration is needed in both ECE and ECSE programs, yet it is difficult to teach students without learning from experienced teachers in actual inclusive settings. Therefore, this study will address how teachers from the two different fields merge their knowledge and skills for teaching children with and without special needs in inclusive settings. Further research should continue to investigate unified early childhood programs. To be approved by NAEYC, programs that prepare early childhood professionals must provide their candidates with opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills, and disposition necessary to meet the needs of all children, including children with special needs. However, some programs go beyond that level of attention to provide a unified or blended program with depth and focus both in general and ECE and in ECSE.

The Conceptual Framework for Professional Development

It is necessary when defining professional development (PD) to evaluate its effects on improving professional practices and producing positive child and family outcomes. Sometimes teacher preparation is excluded from PD in early childhood, but in general, PD efforts have traditionally taken five forms; formal education, credentialing,
specialized, on-the-job in-service training, coaching and/or consultative interaction, and communities of practice or collegial study groups (Zaslow & Martinez-Beck, 2006). PD can range from a single credit of coursework to a semester-long academic course; it is widely viewed as the most effective approach to adequately preparing practitioners and improving their instructional and intervention practices after they enter the workforce (Buysse, Winton, & Rous, 2009).

PD in early childhood has two primary objectives; (1) to advance the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and practices of early childhood providers in their efforts to educate children and support families; (2) to promote a culture for ongoing professional growth in individuals and systems (Sheridan, Edwards, Marvin, & Knoche, 2009). To achieve these two goals, Trivette (2005) and Winton (2006) have suggested that effective PD: (1) be grounded in specific practice-focused content; (2) be intense, sustained over time; (3) be organized around sequenced approach to learning; (4) emphasize application to real life situations; (5) build on learner’s current level of understanding; (6) include guidance and feedback to the learner; and (7) be aligned with instructional goals, learning standards, and curriculum materials.

To show how PD can be applied to creating or evaluating effective early childhood PD efforts, the National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI, 2008) has developed a conceptual framework for early childhood PD (see Figure 2). Early childhood professionals who plan and implement PD can use the conceptual framework, first to think through each of the core components of a PD program (the who, the what, and the how), and then to consider how these elements relate
to each other. This guide offers a process through which planners can use the framework to guide PD efforts for achieving desired learners outcomes.

Figure 2. NPDCI Conceptual Framework for Professional Development in Early Childhood

The definitions of each element in the conceptual framework (NPDCI, 2008)

- The Who: Describe the characteristics of learners in terms of their qualifications, roles, and experience, along with the characteristics and contexts of the children and families they serve.

- The What: Describe the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will be the focus of PD, along with any standards or competencies related to this content area.

- The How: Describe the PD approaches that will be used to organize and facilitate learning, including methods for providing ongoing support, collaboration, guidance, and feedback on specific practices.

- Policies: What local, state or federal policies and initiatives might influence how you approach this PD goal?
• Organizational Structure: How will coordination across multiple agencies, institutions or disciplines be addressed in the PD you are planning?

• Access and Outreach: What efforts to publicize the PD you are planning might lead to increased participation? What incentives might facilitate participation in the PD you are planning?

• Evaluation: What information exists or could be gathered to support the needs addressed through your PD goal? What methods will you use to determine the effectiveness of your efforts?

• Resources: What resources exist or can be leveraged to support this PD goal?

Overall, PD focuses on teacher quality, but the link between a college degree and high quality is not a given. Teacher preparation programs (e.g., coursework and practice) and other PD efforts need to promote high quality approaches. For these, faculty and PD providers must be knowledge mediators and use evidence-based practice (Buysse, Winton, & Rous, 2009). PD cannot be a simple seminar, workshop, or consultation because there are multiple systems and sectors—in other words, there are multiple whos, whats, and hows in terms of the conceptual framework. The way the concept functions is illustrated in Figure 2 as a Venn diagram. Some of the terms—coaching, consultation, mentoring, lesson, reflective supervision, technical assistance, and communities of practice—have appeared in a concept paper that supports collaboration and change in early childhood (Buysse, Winton, & Rous, 2009). However, the authors also noted that there is little agreement on how these methods can enhance PD and be effective in
improving professional practices. Working for children with and without special needs involves collaborating with a diverse group of professionals that might include therapists, school psychologists, Therapeutic Support staffs (TSS), outside agency members, and nurses (Miller, Fader, & Vincent, 2001). Within an interdisciplinary context, different perspectives might emerge, and varying professional backgrounds might lead to different approaches to intervention. Therefore, different professionals must incorporate ways to work together for children with and without special needs.

**Collaboration**

With the rise of inclusion in early education, the roles of ECE and ECSE teachers have undergone significant changes. In the United States, 48% of all children with special needs were placed inside the general education classroom, and that number has gradually risen (U. S, Department of Education, 2003). This movement has created the need for greater collaboration among general ECE and ECSE teachers, demanding a respect for all team members’ viewpoints, values, experiences, and perspectives, even when they are different from one’s own. Collaboration requires the sharing of team member resources such as information, skills, equipment, and materials (Deboer & Fister, 1995-1996). The core team members include general ECE teachers, SPLED teachers, family members, and paraprofessionals; in addition, the whole team members include other teachers (e.g., PE, music, art, and computer), therapists (e.g., physical, occupational, and speech), vision/hearing consultants, administrators, psychologists, and nurses (Snell & Janney, 2005). As such, teams that consist of multiple disciplines are called trans-
disciplinary teams, and all their members must be in agreement to address the need of children with and without special needs (Rainforth & York-Barr, 1997).

Trans-disciplinary team members know that they need collaboration with other members, but they may misunderstand and downscale the meaning of collaboration. For example, they may think, collaboration comes naturally, everyone is doing it, more is better, or it’s about feeling good and liking others (Friend, 2000). However, the reality of collaboration is varied and requires effort to be effective. Collaboration has been described as a process rather than a product (Friend & Bursuck, 2002; Kennedy, Higgins, & Pierce, 2002). Bruner (1991) and Pugach and Johnson (1995) defined it as a process to use for reaching goals that cannot be attained efficiently by acting alone, and what occurs when all members of a team are working together and supporting each other to achieve a specific goal. They suggested collaboration involves:

- Jointly developing and agreeing to a set of common goals and directions;
- Sharing responsibility for obtaining those goals (decision sharing);
- Working together to achieve those goals, using the expertise of each collaborator;
- Consensus building without hierarchical impositions.

An abundance of literature suggests ways for establishing collaborative team teaching. The most often mentioned factors are communication, time for common planning, establishing shared visions for instructional goals and strategies, and managing the classroom environment (Smith & Leonard, 2005). The nature of collaborative knowledge, skills, and dispositions can improve working relationships, service delivery,
and learner outcomes. Recent investigations cover many topics; for example, the value of collaboration and cooperation (Dettmer, Thurston, & Dyck, 2002); the elimination of special education’s stigma and the benefits of children without special needs receiving individualized and modifications (Keefe & Moore, 2004); the engagement level of children with special needs compared to that of children without special needs (Hunt, Soto, Marier, & Doering, 2003); and higher attendance rates (Rea et al., 2002). There is still, however, not much research concerning the effectiveness of collaborative teaching (Gerber & Popp, 2000), and more empirical research must address how successful collaboration benefits both the children with and the educators themselves.

Teachers and administrators are at the frontline of inclusive education, whereby policies mandate them to work together to meet the new standards and help their children achieve them (U.S. DOE, 2004). Embedded in these standards is the understanding that accomplished teachers contribute to the effectiveness of the school by working collaboratively with other educators on instructional policy, curriculum development and staff development (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards policy position, 2002). Teacher’s collaboration and facilitative principal leadership are considered essential foundations for successful inclusive educational programs (Salisbury & McGregor, 2002). Teamwork, mutual goals, teacher empowerment, and using the principal as facilitator emerged as highly significant factors of successful school inclusion, according to Smith and Leonard (2005). They developed a conceptual framework that emphasizes the interactive roles of the principal (or administrator), general education teachers, and special education teachers in cultivating mutually
supportive behaviors for successful collaboration and school inclusion. The conceptual framework is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Smith & Leonard’s Conceptual Framework (2005)

According to Barnes (1999), one of the most important benefits to teachers’ collaboration is the ability to acquire multiple perspectives on each child. Teachers can establish intervention more effectively if given additional perspectives that either confirm an initial concern or offer an alternative interpretation of a particular child’s behavior. The capability to discuss each child in depth within a group of individuals who truly know each child provides extraordinary opportunities to explore different options for the child.

Among the major barriers to developing inclusive environments for young children are a lack of respect for differing views and a resistance to collaboration was major challenges (Smith & Rose, 1993). Another obstacle is that collaboration takes time,
and there is often precious little time provided in the school day to accommodate the need for developing daily plans, interventions, and assessments (Barnes, 1999). Blocks of time are needed for comprehensive sessions, so teachers must also schedule monthly collaboration days for in-depth analysis and evaluation. Smith and Rose (1993) reported that the strategies in developing collaborative services include.

- Building mutual respect and trust between ECE and ECES personnel by acknowledging that each branch of the field bring diverse and necessary skills and knowledge to the early childhood environment, that is, by using the best of both worlds;

- Instituting joint pre-service and in-service training opportunities so that groups receive training together that builds on both sets knowledge bases, thus validating the importance and efficacy of both;

- Sharing ideas about how best to teach a particular skill to a particular child by using approaches that represent a range of degrees of structure and teacher directiveness;

- Modeling collaboration at all levels so that teachers and other direct-services personnel do not feel that they are the only ones expected to undergo a paradigm shift.

Early childhood educators, whether in ECE or ECSE, are called on to coordinate wide range of services for children in the classroom. These teachers need to tap into a knowledge and skills base that includes familiarity with family systems, service
coordination, and special knowledge pertaining to ECE (Fantuzzo et al., 1996) and ECSE. The early childhood teacher is the natural center to guide and coordinate team-based collaborations focused on serving children’s needs (Johnson et al., 1998).

Needed in both ECE and ECSE is a collaborative environment that allows for ingenuity and experimentation on the part of the collective professionals who are supported within the context of the program’s goals. As teachers gain more experience with collaboration, they will encounter challenges associated specifically with hierarchical school structures and patterns of communication, leadership, and fostering a professional community committed to active problem solving and mutual interdependence and support. Over time, the literature must provide more in-depth descriptions of experienced ECE and ECSE teachers’ collaboration skills for future teachers and teachers having difficulty collaborating with others.

The most important observation in this study is that the relationship between collaboration and professional development requires attention, since the process of collaboration among trans-disciplinary members can be a significant aspect of their professional development. This topic will be further examined in Chapter 6 and 7.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Theoretical Framework

This study employed a qualitative methodology designed to better understand human behavior and experience. Qualitative researchers try to grasp the processes by which people construct meaning and describe what those meanings are (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). According to Branlinger et al. (2005), qualitative research is a way to represent how someone interacts and interprets his/her view of situations. It is used to discover insights and interpretations rather than to control a set of variables or to test a hypothesis (Merriam, 1988), and it allows the researchers to interpret and bring to light an understanding of particular subjects and events (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This study specifically used a case study with a phenomenological approach. It includes a variety of data generation techniques (i.e., interviews, observations, documents, and field notes) to bring to light the voice of the teachers in the setting.

Phenomenological Approach

The phenomenological approach seeks to understand the meaning of events and interactions, ‘lived experiences’ in given situations according to a person’s consciousness. Lived experience in phenomenological studies means bringing to the forefront the significance of experiences to the individuals. The participants are seen as conscious human beings (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology discloses the uniqueness of shared
meaning and common practices, the lived experiences (VanManen, 1990). The professional development and collaborations of teachers who teach for both children with and without special needs are studied, with emphasis on the meaning of a phenomenological approach to the individual studies.

Phenomenologists believe that there are variety ways of interpreting experiences through interacting with others, and it is the meaning of one’s experiences that constitute reality (Greene, 1978). A qualitative study stems from a naturalistic paradigm that recognizes multiple realities (Henderson, 1991). Some researchers attempt to create nearly perfect phenomenological descriptions, while others attempt to build abstractions by interpreting from the data from their own points of view (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Qualitative researchers emphasize the subjective because the world is dominated by objects less obstinate than walls, but they do not necessarily deny a reality that stands over and against a human being, capable of resisting action toward it (Blumer, 1980). Most qualitative researchers can record what people say and do using recordings and field-notes; they would not claim the data they collect contain ‘the truth’ or the only way of recording the empirical world, but instead would claim that their rendering can be evaluated in terms of accuracy (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). For this study, the qualitative research tradition produces an interpretation of reality that is useful in understanding the current teachers’ perceptions of their professional development and collaboration in their workforce.

Case Study

A case study is an examination of one setting, a program, a single subject, an institution, or one particular event (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1994; Yin, 1989), but it varies
in its complexity. This case study focused on a system bounded by a particular setting. It describes the experiences and conceptions of six teachers who worked in the same setting with children both with and without special needs. This approach allowed the research to retain meaningful characteristics of real life events (Yin, 1989). Using a case study allowed the inclusion of in-depth descriptions and interpretations, which provide a detailed account of the data collected. Although this case study is not generalizable to an entire population, it attempts to contribute to a richer understanding of the phenomenon.

**Role of the Researcher**

As the sole researcher for this study, I played several different roles. Through them, what I saw, what I heard, and what I felt have had a considerable impact on my teaching philosophy. Not only was I a researcher but also a member of the setting with other teachers who I interviewed. I entered the world of the “people I wished to study, got to know them and earned their trust, while systematically keeping a detailed written account of what was heard and observed” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 3). Being a member of the setting was necessary to help me conduct my study in a more practical and specific way.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stated that “without your data close by, you cannot spontaneously jump in and out of the field ” (p.57); therefore, I searched several nearby early childhood settings and chose the one I thought would be the best placement for my study based on recommendations from ECE & ECSE professionals and my own research. From June 2008 through August 2009, I volunteered to work with the children at the site for a year (from June 2008 through August 2009). The principal in the setting was my
‘gatekeeper’ for conducting this study. She requested a Child Abuse History clearance issued by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s Department of Public Welfare (IRB #31227- see Appendix A). I began as a member of the child development center on June 16, working in the “Monkey’s Room” where children aged 3-5 with and without special needs played and learned. My status was volunteer worker, and my role was to play and help with the children with and without special needs. I did not have specific jobs or duties in the classroom, but I participated in many different experiences with the teachers and children, such as field trips, in and outside play, picnics, and classroom activities.

Considering the potential bias of the researcher vis-a-vis participant (Merriam, 1998), I limited my observation to one classroom. In specific, I focused on communicating and observing the children rather than communicating with the teachers. I did realizing that the more I knew the teachers (potential participants in the study), the more likely the transition from volunteer worker self to my researcher self would become indistinct (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I went into the setting with an open mind and flexible thinking, intending to establish positive rapport with anyone who was physically there—the staff, children, and parents—while trying not to get too involved with the teachers so that I could get natural and objective data if I interviewed them.

With the IRB approval, I turned to my role as the researcher. In a narrative inquiry, the role of the researcher is that of recorder, interpreter, and analyzer of the story as told by the interviewees (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). A relationship between researcher and participant needs a high level of trust, open-mindedness and mutual collaboration. The relationship between each participant and the researcher for this study was distinctive. My role as researcher was separated from my role as a member or an
observer. A full year of contact with the teachers and staff members enhanced the level of acceptance from all the staff and also the children. Although these friendships were somewhat formal, they were trusting relationships similar to those described by Seidiam (1999), who stated that “enough distance from each other that they took nothing for granted” (p. 33). One very fundamental role for this study as the researcher was to build and keep these relationships in order to generate professional data.

My role involved several different acts; an observer, a recorder with my eyes, hands, and ears, an interviewer, an interpreter, and an analyzer. In addition, I needed to be an active learner (Creswell, 1998) who carefully looked from the teacher’s viewpoint rather than from my own as a critic passing judgments. I entered the field without any prejudice, especially as related to ECE and ECSE. This objectiveness was important since participants’ dialogues may change when a researcher’s question inclines toward one specific view. As a researcher, a special regard was paid to being neutral and objective,

I conducted a focus group interview for this study prior to the individual interview. For that, I needed to assume the role of facilitator. One major difficulty was how to control who talked too much and who talked too little, and how to stay on focused on the discussion topic. In addition, since the principal was included in the focus group, there may have been an element of authority in the environment.

**Setting**

The research site for this study was a child center, a nationwide non-profit organization whose services and support are provided through a network of more than 550 sites. The Child Development Center Network (CDCN) is the largest provider of
inclusive child care in the United States. It attempts to provide quality child care to all children and their parents, regardless of ability. Its facility offers ongoing training for staff; low adult-to-child ratios; developmentally appropriate learning activities; and top-quality facilities that meet or exceed industry standards. It is committed to providing high-quality, state-of-the-art inclusive early care and education. It offers a nurturing environment in which typically developing children and children with varying needs learn and grow together.

This study was designed to investigate the perceptions and understandings of ECE and ECSE teachers in a setting with inclusive education for young children with and without special needs, and this site was appropriate for the purpose of this study. More detailed information about this site appears in Chapter 4. The necessary human subject paperwork was completed and approved for this study (IRB # 31227- see Appendix A)

Participants

Neither random nor systematic probabilistic sampling is appropriate for the selection of participants because qualitative research does not aim for generalizability, in a quantitative sense. In considering a selection process most suited to qualitative research, purposeful sampling is a salient component. According to Patton (1990), the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Erlandson et al. (1993) indicated that purposive and directed sampling through human interaction increases the range of data exposed and maximizes the researcher’s ability to identify emerging themes that take into account contextual conditions and cultural norms. Because this study was concerned with gaining a deeper understanding of the teachers’
experience, a purposive sampling approach was selected to address the intensity desired and create the maximum variation (Patton, 1990).

For this study, four teachers (two in ECE and two in ECSE) and an administrator with experience teaching children with and without special needs shared stories of their experiences. These five participants were interviewed to gain their insight and perceptions of ECE and ECSE programs both while they were in teacher preparation programs and while collaborating in inclusive settings. They were chosen according to convenience and purposeful sampling. An unexpected event occurred on the last day of the interview session. A therapist at the center showed interest in the study and volunteered to be a participant. I decided to include her because she had more than 35 years of experience in the field of early childhood. Further details on the participants are provided in Chapter 4.

Data Collection

Qualitative research does not fit neatly within the boundaries of any single scholarly field (Riessman, 1993). There is no one method for conducting narrative research; it is as diverse as the researchers themselves. According to Patton (1990), a combination method of data collection procedures and techniques for gathering and analyzing data are desirable. This study uses interviews (focus group and individual), observations, and documents to record the stories. Quantitative research addresses the preselected factors of successful inclusion and teacher collaboration, but there are limited voices behind the numbers and factors. Given the purpose of this study—to hear the
experiences and perceptions of the teachers—the interview, observation, and field notes process suited this researcher’s needs.

In order to investigate the research questions posed by this study, four data sources were used; (1) a focus group interview, (2) individual interviews, (3) observations in the classrooms, playground, and staff meetings and shadowing participants (with field notes), (4) documents.

**Focus Group interview**

For qualitative research, group interviews are structured to foster dialogues among the participants about specific issues, and they are particularly useful when the topic being explored is general. The focus group interview is used either to stimulate talk from multiple perspectives so that the researcher can learn what the range of views are, or to promote talk on a topic that informants might not be able to thoughtfully discuss in an individual interview (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). A major problem with focus group interviews is that each participant may not share personal or deep experiences because of the lack of privacy. Another difficulty may be the presence of an authority in the focus group meeting when participants work in a hierarchical system.

A group interview was conducted (July 29, 2009) with the principal and four teachers prior to the individual interviews. The session was audio taped with the participants’ permission and open-ended questions were used. Although this researcher went with a list of interview questions (see Appendix B), the order of the questions was not followed. This researcher tried to flow with the mood to offer the participants a chance to shape the content of the interview, encouraging the participants to talk about
their areas of interest and to pick up on the topics the participants initiated—as Rubin and Rubin (1995) noted, a guided conversation.

The purposes of the focus group interview were. (1) to get data from multiple viewpoints from cross-fields educators with different roles in the setting, (2) to observe agreements and disagreements among the teachers, (3) to sense the circumstances and the relationships among teachers, staff and administrators.

The participants were informed of the purpose of the study at the beginning of the interview session and promised confidentiality. The form was distributed for all the participants to sign (see Appendix C). A guideline for focus group interview was handed out to help the participants understand the process and feel more relaxed.

Good interviewers communicate well with participants by being attentive, nodding their heads, using appropriate facial expressions, and sympathizing with pertinent probes to generate more rich and deep talk. Using probes, the interviewer may.

1. ask for clarification when the participant mentions something unclear or unfamiliar, 2. try to avoid having the participant simply answer “yes” or “no”, 3. ask questions to show he/she is actively listening to the participant. This interviewer used phrases such as “Can you tell me more?”; “What do you mean?”; “Would you explain that?”; “What were you thinking at that time?”; and “Can you give me examples?”. At the end of interview, the contents were summarized for review in order to clarify what the participants meant (member check).
Individual Interviews

Since the research purpose focused on the teachers’ perspectives, the interview, as data source, was most compatible with this study. The format of interview questions was the same as the focus group interview, and each participant was asked the same content of interview questions except the principal. Additional questions for the principal were based on other participants’ responses. While the focus group interview generated general ideas, the individual interviews generated deeper private information. Based on the results of the focus group interview, individual interviews were planned according to which topics warranted more or less focus.

Each individual interview took an average of 1.5 hours. The settings were very casual and comfortable. However, scheduling the interview session was not easy with each participant. The circumstances varied depending on the participant’s situation. For example, one participant had recently given birth; the interview was cut off twice during the session because the baby needed attention. Another participant forgot the time, requiring this researcher to go the participant’s home because she was off that day. Most interviews were set in the morning before the center became busy—usually at 7.30am or 8.00 am. In spite of these difficulties none of the participants hesitated to describe their opinion of my questions.

The researcher’s role was the key to forming good rapport with the participants in the individual interviews. As in the focus group interview, probing questions were asked to seek a deep understanding and to reflect on individual experiences. Through the process of in-depth interviewing, the focus was on teachers’ personal experiences working with children with and without special needs, and also working with other
teachers. This researcher attempted to provide an environment for teachers to freely share individual stories about program coursework and field site experiences related to children with and without special needs. All interview sessions were audio taped.

The individual interview included a member check similar to that of the focus group interview. That is, the researcher summarized what the participant described during the focus group interview and asked the participant to assess its accuracy.

Additionally, short informal interviews were conducted during observations with teachers, therapists, the principal, and other staff members. This information was not audio taped but was written as records.

Observations

The observation process represented the longest period of data collection for this study, lasting from June 2008 to August 2009. The frequency of site visits was not consistent, but occurred up to three times a week. Observation began as soon as this researcher entered the site. It included the environment (i.e. classrooms, in and out playgrounds, hallway, therapy room, walls), people (i.e. teachers, the principal, therapists, assistant teachers, outside agency people), and events (including meetings) to capture the teachers in their natural environments. Short and simple interviews were asked after each observation to provide new perspectives to the interpretations of the teacher’s behaviors and the researcher’s perception (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Patton (1990) stated that observations are the means to validate “what is reported in interviews” (p. 245). For example, all the participants mentioned teachers’ meetings as one way of teacher collaboration in the site during both the focus group and individual
interviews; this researcher checked the schedules of the meetings and observed many of them. Interestingly, observations showed a bigger picture than the interviews. The information from the interviews was limited to the participants’ radius of actions and opinions. On the other hand, observations included every member in the site, providing a bigger picture of their relationships and more. Field notes and reflective memos were created as the records of observations.

An extension of observations, shadowing of the participants was used to reach an understanding of the environment from their points of view. This process was not much different than observations, but it required giving more attention to the participants while providing the third person’s point of view of the relationship between the participants and other environments. Each participant was shadowed for 3 to 4 hours in the workplace. During this process, they explained in greater detail about their work although it was not asked for, leading to a deeper understand of their role in the site and their relationships with others. All shadowing processes were recorded in writing, and follow-up interviews were used whenever clarification was needed.

Field notes

The interview sessions were intentionally spread out to ensure time for organizing written memos and coordinating memories. They were written up as field notes after each observation, interview, or other session. Field notes included a description of people, objects, place, events, activities, conversations, and the researcher’s reflections. While interviews reflect almost 100% of a participants’ point of view, field notes contain the researcher’s point of view. Since observation played a large role in this study, detailed,
accurate, and extensive field notes are significant. Not only observations but also interviews rely on field notes to capture the essence of the interviews more completely than the tape recorder, which cannot catch sight, smells, impressions, and moods (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

During and after each observation, I wrote to identify and capture thoughts and feelings about the observation session and events that occurred. These field notes were used as a data source to provide a framework from which to consider the teachers’ behavior and actions in the classroom (Marriam, 1988). They allowed the connection of observations and words with the mood and intent of the situation (Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005). Although field notes should be detailed and descriptive, the researcher tried not to make any assumptions about the setting. To prevent this kind of mistakes, questions were always asked if something was unclear.

This researcher tried to write as much as possible, drew pictures, and made voice recordings. Both descriptive and reflective (with Observer’s Comment, OC) filed notes contained. Descriptions of the participants and the setting; participants’ gestures, accents, facial expressions and poses when talking; descriptions of events (both expected and unexpected), activities, and the participants’ behaviors; and reflects on all these information.

Documents

The term document refers materials such as photographs, videos, films, memos, letters, diaries, clinical case records, and memorabilia that can be used as supplemental information as part of a case study whose main data source is observation or interviewing,
and many qualitative researchers turn to documents as their primary source of data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). There are three types of documents; Personal, official, and popular culture. The impact of these materials varies; some provide only some facts while others play a major part in the research.

The documents for this study also carried differences of weight. They included an official web-based site, teacher records and personnel files, school brochures, an e-newsletter about events and other activities, handouts for each meeting, curriculums for each class, statements posted on walls and more. Each adds to the data on the school’s attitude towards inclusion and quality-education. Each document was used for a different purpose. Sometimes a participants’ knowledge or experience was not fully explained in interviews and observations, but documents could support those limitations. For example, when the teachers talked about in-service trainings, more detailed information was needed and documents named all the training sources. When one participant showed her teaching records and personal files, I could sense future in-service trainings. Regarding the importance of the availability and the use of using documents for studies (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), all documents collected were very useful—even a small memo—for explaining or proving interviews and observations.

These four data sources were the basis of analysis for this study, yielding empirical and realistic data. Each data source, its provider, and its purpose are identified in Table 4.
Table 4. Procedural Map of the Data Source

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>participants</th>
<th>purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Interview transcripts</td>
<td>Four teachers and the principal (N=5)</td>
<td>To reflect all different perspectives on teacher’s professional development, and teacher’s collaboration team teaching in inclusive classroom with children with and without special needs in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Interviews transcripts</td>
<td>Original four teachers, an additional teacher, and the principal (N=6) *Several additional questions were included for the principal compare to other teachers’</td>
<td>To gather individual point of view on the topics. Unlikely in group interview, the researcher try to get more information on the view of each field’s perspective to catch their difference views of each other’s field of study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation &amp; Shadowing (with field notes)</td>
<td>Observation on people, settings, environments, and interactions (e.g., classrooms, play ground, teachers’ meeting, and other place where the interactions occurred between teachers)</td>
<td>To identify the circumstances of the setting and between people in the site. To describe the researcher’s subjective view in an accurate way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documents</td>
<td>web-based official site, teacher record and personal files, school brochure, handouts for each meeting, curriculums of each class, statements on the wall were collected</td>
<td>To provide additional information for the setting and support other data sources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Analysis and Interpretation

According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), data analysis means “the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that the researcher accumulates to come up with findings” (p. 159). Each phase of data analysis is designed to be reduced into manageable chunks and allow interpretation of the data as the researcher formulates meanings and insights from the words and actions of the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The interviews are
analyzed for themes as they evolved from the written transcriptions. Written observation notes are examined to determine the relationships between the behaviors in the school environment and the comments made in the interviews (Merriam, 1988). The field notes from the observations are then analyzed to obtain clarity on the events that surrounded the teachers’ behavior (Kleinman & Coop, 1993). The process of analyzing the data includes working with the data, organizing them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them, and searching for patterns (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Identifying themes was at the last phase of this process.

**Phase 1. Developing coding categories**

From creating the proposal to collecting data for this study, the process was not simple but developed in consecutive order without any major problem. After all the data was gathered, however, there was a feeling of emptiness and an inability to figure out what to do. This researcher began to see, feel, taste, smell, and to hear the data, gaining insight by reading them repeatedly and breaking them down in diverse ways. This phase was an initial step of developing profiles. While reading the data, certain words, phrases, facial expressions, patterns of behavior and speaking were repeated and stood out. Developing a coding system involved several steps. The data were searched for regularities and patterns as well as for topic, and then put into files according topics and patterns. These words and patterns became coding categories for sorting the descriptive data. The data was then organized into meaningful chunks, excluding data irrelevant to this study.
Phase 2. Labeling

“Open coding,” according to Strauss & Corbin (1998), refers to “the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data” (p. 101). The purpose of this coding process is to enable the researcher to identify the similarities and differences of each category generated in Phase 1. For each category of data, a textual description was written. The descriptions varied; a few words, sentences, paragraphs, or combined phrases. The data was filed according to the subject on which each sentence mainly focused. In many cases, a sentence was included more than one folder. For example, a sentence could be placed in Folder 1 related to inclusion, and it also could fit in other folders such as professional development.

Phase 3. Subcategorizing

Axial coding—that is, linking data for each developed categories—was next, aligned with Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) description of “the process of relating categories to their subcategories at the level of properties and dimensions” (p. 123). After developing and labeling the categories, the creation of discrete categories began by grouping similar labels generated from phase 2. This process enriched the data by identifying similarities and differences. In this study, each developed and labeled category in phase 1 and 2 had subcategories with more folders in each primary folder. For example, Folder 1, inclusion, might have several different labels such as ‘inclusion in general (Folder 1-a)’, ‘inclusion in the site (Folder 1-b)’, ‘the advantage of inclusion’ (Folder 1-c), ‘the difficulties of inclusion’ (Folder 1-d), and ‘personal story or experience of inclusion’ (Folder 1-e).
Phase 4. Generating themes

To search for themes is an essential process for the interpretation of a lived experience (Manen, 1990). The purpose of this process was to integrate categories to generate themes for this study, and its phase is more interpretative to find the essence of the participants’ experiences. By means of generating themes, common and relevant meanings from the data were sought, encouraging the investigation of patterns and composed themes that built a story connected to the teachers’ experiences. Then implications were sought, drawn from the participants’ descriptions that enabled deeper understanding among the readers. Every word or gesture that a participant spoke or displayed at her interview or observation session caused this researcher to seek connotations behind them. This phase was the final goal of this study to draw connections among the participants’ experiences in order to identify main themes in the phenomena under study.

Ethical Issues

During the data collection process, the ethics of research using human subjects were considered. Two issues dominated; informed consent and the protection of informants from harm. These issues, according to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), attempt to insure that (1) informants enter research project voluntarily, and (2) informants are not exposed to risks greater than the gains they might derive. In April 2009, this researcher submitted the ‘Application for the Use of Human Participants – Expedited and Full Reviews’ to the Office of Research Protections (ORP). ORP approved work at the exempt level in June 2009.
During the interviews, each teacher’s willingness to participate in this study was witnessed using a consent form (see Appendix D). Moreover, the participants’ privacy was later secured by using pseudonyms for all of them.

Verification Issues

To enhance the quality of study, the issue of trustworthiness is important to qualitative research (Marriam, 1998). The term “trustworthiness” was established to ensure the quality of inquiries in natural settings, accomplished through credibility, transferability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility refers to how well study findings represent multiple constructions adequately and is in alignment with internal validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Patton (2002), credibility in qualitative research has three elements; “(1) rigorous techniques and methods for collecting data that are carefully analyzed, with attention to issues of validity, reliability, and triangulation; (2) credibility of the researcher, which is dependent on training, experience, previous work, status, and presentation of self; and (3) fundamental appreciation of naturalistic inquiry, qualitative methods, inductive analysis, and holistic thinking” (p. 552-553). In this study, Lincoln and Guba’s prolonged engagement, researcher’s role and perspective, triangulation, member checks, and peer examination were employed to enhance credibility.

Prolonged engagement: I have been involved in the site since June 2008 and have an on-going commitment to this site. I was a volunteer worker at the site for a year until
the interviews were conducted for this study. My job was playing with children with and without special needs and helping teachers to prepare classroom activities. If I attended at morning shift (9.00 am to 1.00 pm) one day, I attended at the afternoon shift (1.00 pm to 5.00 pm) the next day. I attended three or four times a week. Until the focus group interview, I kept in touch with the principal and one classroom teacher. After the interview session, I took the email addresses and telephone numbers of all participants to keep in contact easily and conveniently, and made daily communication about any issues related to this research with the participants. This prolonged contact between the researcher and the participants reinforced the credibility of this research.

**Researcher’s role and perspective:** A researcher is a tool of qualitative research, and the subjectivity of the researcher may affect the study’s credibility. While threats to validity may have occurred due to the researcher’s limitations, multiple data sources were used to validate and crosscheck the study findings. The researcher attempted to provide fair data without professional judgment or bias.

**Triangulation:** Triangulation is used to compare the emergent themes from the different data sources, defined by Denzin (1978) as the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon. Simply, organizational researchers can improve the accuracy of their judgment by collecting different kinds of data bearing on the same phenomenon (Jick, 1978). Multiple sources of data are better in a study than a single source because they lead to a fuller understanding of the phenomena (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In this study, the focus was always that of the teachers’ points of view on their professional development and collaboration team teaching in inclusive settings, while the mode of data collection varied, verifying themes across all data sources.
**Member Checks:** Members checking involves sharing the data with the participants and asking for feedback about the reliability of the researcher’s interpretations. In this study, I asked the teachers to read their data and provide feedback. During this process, they highlighted and further elaborated on some of their statements in the verbatim transcriptions until they were satisfied with the meanings they made of their experiences.

**Peer examination:** Peer checking or examination is an independent peer analysis used to increase the reliability of the multiple sources. The observer reviewed and analyzed the multiple data sources for each individual case, conducted a content analysis, and identified emergent themes. Themes from the peer checking were compared to the researcher’s themes for congruency, and only those identified by both were included in the final analysis. During the analysis process, I secured the assistance of two colleagues who discussed my topics and provided advice. The peer checking here was that they and I agreed to generate themes. If there was disagreement among us, we discussed it and made corrections.

**Transferability**

Qualitative research focuses on rich description of a phenomenon while quantitative study considers generalization to be a crucial element. Qualitative studies are interested in deriving universal statements of general social processes between similar settings; therefore, their concern is not the generalization of findings, but other settings and subjects are generalizable (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The findings in this study may be applicable to other inclusive settings for potential and current teachers who will and
are working in inclusive settings. In another sense of transferability, qualitative studies include rich descriptions that readers to understand issues and the significance of the study by detailed descriptions of people and settings (Denzin, 2001; Patton, 2002).

**Confirmability**

For qualitative researchers, the concern often arises that the observer records only what he or she wants to see rather than what is really there (LeCompte, 1987). For subjectivity, qualitative researchers are often reluctant to talk with subjects accustomed to quantitative methods. In this study, as per Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) advice to use an audit trail to help establish confirmability, I used an audit trail to ensure this study was fair and not biased. As part of the audit trail, this researcher wrote reflective journal entries (including memos and verbatim transcriptions of interviews) to show how the researcher’s thinking changed and whether the researcher maintained perspective over time.

In summary, this chapter has reviewed the methodology used from theoretical background to the issues of verification. The following chapter presents the results of the study, beginning with portraits of the participants and an exploration of the uniqueness of the context which details the backgrounds of the teachers and the setting.
CHAPTER 4

PORTRAITS OF THE SETTING AND THE PARTICIPANTS

THE SETTING

1. Descriptions of the Setting

General information about the site was described Chapter 3, but more detailed descriptions are required for a better understanding of the site’s unique circumstances and position. These descriptions have been culled from a variety of sources, including interviews, observations, and documents.

(a) The philosophy: The child center helps children develop to their full potential by encouraging growth at each child’s pace. The Director of the setting commented on the center’s Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP).

The babies are 6 weeks to two years, but for instance, we do not just if you turn to two, we do not just move you. If you are not ready to move up, we are not going to move you. And we have a little girl, who is two years old but she is functioning about 12 months, so she is going to stay there for a while, likewise, in the 2 or 3 years old, 3, 4 and 5 in the 2 year-old room. We've had 5 years old before because development lacked they are. So, we like to progress children naturally. We do not want them to ‘it is your third birthday and it is March. (Individual Interview—the Director, August 2009)

The mission of the child center is to apply value to the lives of all young learners by offering a child-centered curriculum, which recognizes the importance of fostering mutual respect of diverse learners as a means to establish a positive social and educational foundation. The center is recognized as the leading provider of quality inclusive early care and education within the community it serves. From the nationally
recognized Character Counts Education Program, the child center adapted trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, and citizenship as values. As a state recognized quality early care and education center and a participant in the Keystone STARS Quality Initiative Program, the child center has adopted the National Association of the Education of Young Children’s (NAEYC) Code of Ethical Conduct. The NAEYC identified core values, which inform daily practice, as follows. “Standards of ethical behavior in early childhood care and education are based on commitment to the following core values that are deeply rooted in the history of the field of early childhood care and education” (Documents from a staff meeting, August 2009). The Director of the site described the educational philosophy of the school in detail during her individual interview.

Actually we just updated our mission statements. We really want to take this stance that we are applying values utilize all children regardless of where they are coming to us from, regardless of they can walk or talk, we are here to give them a quality early education experience no matter what they can or cannot do. And to help people understand, to help people to understand why that is important for us, why that is beneficial, and why we should not go back to the old days of putting all the special children in the basement of school, why this is becoming a reality including people not just early education but throughout life now, and technology and adaptation are helping to make easier for everyone with disability to fully participate in their life and deserve that. We are trying to change our mind set that has been really strong for really long time to help people know that we are not just special education. But at the same time, we also have to be real and recognize that we are a lot more special ed. than early education. We still enroll more special needs children than we do typical children. It is helping people to understand that ‘we want to be inclusive’. Nationally speaking, our program would like to have 70% typical and 30% special needs, but we tend to have 60% special needs and 40% typical or 50:50.

For teachers’ theoretical background of their teaching, each participant was asked about a goal or a philosophy of teaching. The followings are the theoretical backgrounds as the participants described them;
My goal from a Director's view is to help not just the family's service, but also the community where we live has better understanding of what it means to put together children with disabilities and without disabilities. I do not think that we have done strong enough job helping people to understand that it is not something to fear that your typical child is not going to catch autism or down syndrome or cerebral palsy. So, when they think about our program, they do not think that is for disable children or people upset to me that is for the retarded children. I need to educate people better. My philosophy of teaching comes down to help the children, learn how to learn. I do not subscribe to just one philosophy, and I still want to give children opportunity to learn. I read over the years about all the different philosophies from even just different modality, the Montessori methods, the Reggio method. All of different methods that I think they are all have some great elements. But I think it is an inclusive setting, I have yet to read one philosophy that to me can be completely intact apply to an inclusive setting. It is just because the dynamic of students we serve. I think if I were in a class today, you see a trace of different methodologies and theories, Piaget or Vigotsky in pieces. No, at the same time, there is not really one that I completely shun either. I just think we serve diverse population that at any given moment, a different theory can apply. That will be the best practice for that child which I think it is also the most challenging thing about the inclusive setting. (Individual Interview-the Director, August 2009)

I do not have a specific theory I follow. Like if you ask me what I tend to believe or follow, it is kind of mix match of everything what I have found work through my years of experiences. For my teaching goal, helping kids to be independent as they possibly can be. I mean that is what occupational therapy is about. I mean I want them to be able to be independent in the classroom, independent taking care of themselves, independent socializing, as independent as they can possibly be. (Individual Interview-OT, August 2009)

I think it just help the child get to the next level. Whatever they are learning to walk, get them to run, or just keep on advancing which level they are at reaching the next milestone. If a child is 6 years old and just learning to walk, you want to her/him walk more than anything. So, you get the other children involved and practice. (Individual Interview-Lead Teacher B, August 2009)

I think it is more collective. I pull a little bit of everything. There is not one method. I use a lot of behaviorism in my classroom, but there is a little bit of pieces of different instructional methods. I will not just say there is one way because I do believe that whatever works best for that child is how I should reach that child. To make sure that each student is in a
setting where they can learn and grow, and to use whatever instructional methods or teaching styles to meet their needs. Ideal, everyone’s voices are heard. (Individual Interview-Lead Teacher A, August 2009)

The participants’ educational philosophies and goals were very flexible because they serve children with all abilities to help them to develop. Interestingly, the Director admitted that the program was more directed toward a special education setting although serving both children with and without special needs. It was against what the participants described that they tried to balance ECE and SPLED practice in the setting.

(b) The program: High quality child care is a priority for parents of children with all abilities, and the center provides an optimal environment for learning and development for children and parents. A participant called the setting an inclusive program in the focus group interview, and other participants agreed.

We say that we are inclusive program. We strive being inclusive program. (Focus Group Interview-Program Support Staff member, August, 2009)

The program provides a safe, child-friendly atmosphere, caring, professional trained staff, a low child-to-staff ratio, developmentally appropriate learning activities, active parent-center partnerships, low staff turnover, and individualized learning plans. The center offers extended care from 7.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. weekdays, for the ages of 6 weeks to 5 years plus 6-year-olds not ready for kindergarten (program brochure, August 2009). The participants were very proud of their inclusive program and they asserted that the program provides differentiated services compared to other general programs.

If we say it is day care, it is day care. And if we say it is party time, it is party time. If it is circle time, we all try to work together in a circle time. If things are not working well, we can make it in two smaller circles. And
then we have one circle, two circles, but why one circle at a circle and the other child is at a table doing quiet activity. They are not playing at centers. And the same thing, if the child wants to go art first, they can check in and become the art, but we rotate. So they all get a turn, and it is probably like one teacher per 3 kids at the max. So, it is more individualized to the child in needs. If they need extra help with cutting, I can help them to cut. And then, you are not running around to all the other children. So, it is more individualized by the number was like smaller groups but more focused. (Individual Interview-lead teacher B, August 2009)

Table 2 (Documents, August 2009) showed a daily schedule in the Monkey Room for children aged 36 months to 48 months with a Lead Teacher And an assistant teacher. During daycare, the lead teachers prepare the classrooms for the day and meet with parents from 7.30 a.m. to 8.45 a.m.

Table 5. Daily Schedule of the Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.30 – 8.45 a.m.</td>
<td>Day care with assistant teaching staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.45 – 9.00</td>
<td>Circle time 1 (calendar and weather)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.00 – 9.30</td>
<td>Bathroom/Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.30 – 9.45</td>
<td>Circle time 2 (hello song, how are you, book/theme)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.45 – 10.45</td>
<td>Centers/theme activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.45 – 11.00</td>
<td>PATHS Lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.00 – 11.45</td>
<td>Gross motor time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.45</td>
<td>Good bye to AM-only students (parent pick-up &amp; transportation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.45–12.15p.m.</td>
<td>Bathroom and lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.15 – 1.00</td>
<td>Rest time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.00 – 1.30</td>
<td>Wake up/bathroom/sensory activities (play dough, water play)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.30 – 1.45</td>
<td>Afternoon circle (theme extensions, PATHS, group activity prep)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.45 – 2.45</td>
<td>Centers/ theme extension activity or group activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.45 – 3.00</td>
<td>Bathroom/snack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00 – 3.15</td>
<td>Wrap up circle/ classroom clean sweep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.15 – 4.00</td>
<td>Gross motor time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>Good bye to PM-only students (parent pick-up &amp; transportation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.00 – 5.30</td>
<td>PM daycare</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(c) The organization: Figure 5 shows an organization chart of the center, and only teachers who are hired by the center are included, not those from outside agencies. The
chart shows the different types of teachers, their relationships, and their ranks. Since the site is within a larger organization, there were additional staff members superior to the Director. However, the original chart from the Director was modified to focus only on the site of data collection. During focus group and individual interviews, teachers described the different types of staffs and their role in the setting.

The Director:

The Director is really scheduling our days. She is attending meetings about this school. She is attending fun raising events. She is in charge of financial agreements between parents. She usually holds first meeting with parents that are interested. She gives towards development side, and she attends meetings based on trainings. She actually attend training on be in a Director. She attends meetings on like communities, pre-school programs around. She tries to collaborate with other pre-school programs. So, she is more or less the person that holds together. And she is in charge of more or less everything you see in here. And she also does observations in classrooms to make sure keeping with everything. She is in charge of facilitating like if there was a conflict, she is in charge of facilitating that. And hiring, she helps with hiring. She works as team with development side, hiring people. (Individual Interview-lead Teacher B, August 2009)

Program Support Staff member:

We create this new role for me to do IEP supports. I can help to provide more of the mediation between the different groups and help them. I hope that the collaboration piece a little bit more between parents, outside forks, and other forks. (Focus Group Interview-Program Support Staff member, August 2009)

A lot of collaboration between the staff, the classroom teachers, the parents, because she does a lot of the parents contacts things like that. So, that is very special role. (Focus Group Interview-The Director, August, 2009)

Lead Teacher:

We have two lead teachers, the group supervisors. What the state call them. They are kind of overly responsible for their classrooms. We then have a senior lead teacher, and the reason she is the senior lead teacher is she had been here the longest. By the state regulations, if I am out, somebody who is full-time person has to be the second in coming. So, if I am gone, she is the one I am going to say, 'here is who scheduled and when, these things
are achieved’. So, she takes on that role. And she is very good at that.  
(Individual Interview-the Director, August 2009)

We have the lead teacher which is in charge of individual education plans,  
communication in the families, communication with co-workers,  
analysis of skills, planning of curriculum for the children, and then  
following through in the classroom on, like a structured class. That is the  
lead teacher. And then as well as attend meetings regarding children,  
participate like fund raising events, participate the community events, and  
just continuing on that way. (Individual Interview-lead Teacher B, August 2009)

Assistant Teacher:  
We then have two assistant teachers and we have a long term sub. Right  
now, because we have one class does not have assistant teacher. All of our  
assistant teachers are degree holders in related fields. But their role is  
definitely more in the morning than the afternoon, for instance, they are  
going to cover day care time until their class starts. So, they are going to  
make breakfast, they are going to help with nap and lunch. They do less of  
the curriculum specific things and more of general day functions. They do  
ot for teaching. They all have degrees, but they do some different work.  
(Individual Interview-the Director, August 2009)

Some of them are early education, some of them are social worker, and  
some of them are behavior management. It just depends. It is usually  
variety as long as they have high school diplomas, they can be assistant  
teachers. (Individual Interview-Lead Teacher B, August 2009)

Student Teacher:  
We have three student teachers as well. We have three student teachers  
right now. Two long term sub, and then we also summer camp counselor  
for school age group. (Individual Interview-the Director, August 2009)

Personal Care Aide:  
We have personal care aids that work with certain students might extra  
educational support. Educational meeting that they might work more on  
the numbers and colors, and then keep them on the track with daily routine.  
Just some type of support for the child throughout the day or else, they  
might need personal care aids if the child is a little bit more like fright risk  
or might need some physical assistance, like that kind of stuff. (Individual  
Interview-Lead Teacher B, August 2009)

Other Staff member in the site:  
We have two receptionists here. One of them is our CEO's administrative  
assistant, and the other is our system's specialist. So, she works mostly
with our developmental stuff, and then I guess 25% of time to do our billing for center. Her background is in rehabilitative services. She actually did her internship with us though which is really beneficial because she got to know how the classrooms work, but she also has a skill set for what she's doing now. And I think it helps her related families quite a bit. (Individual Interview-the Director, August 2009)

Outside Agency:
For students who need behavioral intervention, we work with some programs. There is enhance achievement, there is NHS (Northern & Western Human) Services. These are outside agencies. We might have students they need more help with behaviors rather than cognitive skills. They need behavioral interventions, so that we have therapeutic support staff (TSS) or behavioral specialists inside of classroom, and also giving us interventions to use to help children’s success. So, we have to collaborate with them because they might have whole separate treatment plans. That is working on a something other than our IEP goals. (Focus Group Interview-Lead Teacher A, August 2009)

Therapist:
My employer is not this school. I work for the IU, and they contract me to this school (Individual Interview-OT, August 2009)

On the top of that, some of our children receive outside therapists. The TSSs do not count in the mix, but most them are only here for certain amount of time. So, they are not here all the time. They can be only in the classroom one day or two days. It really depends on the child. (Individual Interview-Lead Teacher B, August 2009)

Behavior Specialist:
We also have behavior specialists who are in charge of TSS, which are therapeutic staff support. And so the BSC is the person in charge of creating like individual plan for the TSS and the child work on. (Individual Interview-Lead Teacher B, August 2009)

Therapeutic staff supports:
They are in charge of certain children with behavior issues. So, you will see them more on children with autism spectrum. (Individual Interview-Lead Teacher B, August 2009)

There were different types of teachers with different roles in the setting. Although they all came from different fields, they worked with and for the same children with and
without special needs. This reflected the need for collaboration among these teachers further analyzed in the following chapters. Figure 4 provides a view of the organizational chart.

Figure 4. Organizational Chart (modified from the original document, August 2009)

(d) Hiring Process and Qualification: There was no teacher with an ECE degree except the Director (enrolling in a masters ECE program) so the process of hiring and teacher qualifications need to be addressed. Most information about hiring was described by the Director.

We want to know their backgrounds where they have worked. We have a reference check obviously. We also have a split interview. I do not always interview candidates that we do not ask to come in for work interview. For instance, we had one who told us that her favorite part of the day was when children go home, and she wants this job for internet access and help the insurance. We did not ask her to come for the working interview because she was not the one we want in our classrooms. For the lead teachers, they have to have teaching degrees. Or well, no, they have to have teaching degrees just with her certificate or confidence is kind of special circumstance. She works here so long and she learned so much, and the state said if you work 4 years with related degree you can have a certificate. We would advertise to hire special education or early education teachers. (Individual Interview-the Director, August 2009)
The process was not much different than at other schools, but it was unexpected and a little surprising when the Director talked about her opinion and experiences concerning the background of hiring teachers:

You have to hire new people and that is where that the question really come and play as 'who do I hire?' 'Do I hire someone with early education backgrounds and teach them special piece?' 'Do I hire someone with special education piece and try to teach something early education?' It is really a big challenge. I cannot say that I have had more luck hiring the special education backgrounds staff and helping them to learn how to ease up and be more early education than it is hire an early education person and teach them the special education piece. We tried that, and it was a disaster. She was a wonderful early education teacher someone we had here. She could not rap her mind around the importance of the structure for certain kid's behavior implementation, for certain children's documentation. She was not well organized or interested in those things that you have to be here (pointed her head). In this school, you have to have a teaching certificate in special education or relative fields, elementary or early education or you have to have a human service degree with 4 years of experience, and the state will grand you a certificate of confidence which is where Jess came in. That is something that recently comes along because it is getting harder and harder to find certified teaching staff, one who work for the early education pay. So, it is becoming a state challenge. They need and I know they are on a track, but they need to see and pay us professionals if they want to have that level of professionalism in this field. And that is a challenge here. (Individual Interview-the Director, August 2009)

This information was definitely unexpected, so I probed with a question. “So, basically they have to have special education background first?” to make sure that I understood correctly.

That is the preference. The reason for that is because we have a contract with center intermediate unit number 10. That is where the funding comes from for the children with disabilities. That is the funding that pays for speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and their requirement is the same as the public schools. So, we are responsible for the children's individual as educations plans, so we have to show them we have qualifications to do that. So, that is why. If we did not have that contract we could hire whoever we want it if we thought they are qualified. (Individual Interview-the Director, August 2009)
Again, a probe was used to get the Director’s point accurately. “Sounds like someone who have special background are easier to adapt early childhood education than someone who has early childhood education background to adapt special education.” The Director endorsed for the researcher’s question.

That is what I found. (Individual Interview-the Director, August 2009)

The Director continued.

I think because they already understand that each child as an individual and what works for one, what works for the other, whereas the individual with early backgrounds, like I said we had one was a remarkable. She understood play, she understood the importance of music and movement and cooperation. But that was where stopped. She did not understand that certain children need certain parameters. She did not know how to make those adaptations, and that was harder. It is easy for special education teachers in the early education. It is not because there is much more resume, and there is much more structured. There used to be different density I think. So, teaching them how to let go and understand of the children should got more of the play, and I think 'can be more flexible'. It is hard, but for my perspective, it is not as hard as teaching early education person how to do all of the other elements that come with special education child. (Individual Interview-the Director, August 2009)

These dialogues are important toward understanding the reality of teacher qualifications in inclusive programs, what the schools’ preferences are for hiring someone, and also reflecting what the higher levels of ECE need to adapt and modify their curriculum to meet the needs of inclusive programs. This may be a reason there was no teacher with an ECE background at this school. The Director’s preference to hire teachers with special education backgrounds rather than general ECE backgrounds connoted important meanings, stated in following chapter where ECE and SPLED are analyzed.
2. The uniqueness of the setting

It is natural for participants to talk about their experiences and situations when asked about their studies. Participants also described about their workforce. There were several points that were very unique about the culture of the setting. The unique characteristics of the site were; (1) not only teachers but also therapists had their own room; (2) the classroom teachers called themselves as ‘Developmental Teachers’, not general nor special teachers; (3) the role of ‘Program Support Staff member’; (4) a peer coaching system for teachers; (5) teachers keep a Professional Development Record (PDR); (6) the atmosphere of the relationship among teachers was changed; (7) different types of staff meetings occurred at the site; and (8) teachers with ECE backgrounds were rare.

First, some participants maintained that collaboration between teachers and therapist was easy at the site because the therapists worked longer hours than those at other public schools, and they have their own room unlike many other centers. The therapists (OT and PT) noted.

Last year, we had so many kids in this program. I was pretty much there all the time. I am usually, like there maybe three days a week, in other preschools the other two days a week. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

We are pretty lucky at this site in that. We spend a lot of time here. Many times the therapists really come to a site to work with child, and then have to go to another site, whereas, the speech therapist is really full time here. The OT and I spend the bulk of our time, the majority of our time here. So, that is a big fact is that we are on this site, so we are available more. And that gives us more opportunities for collaboration. (Individual Interview, August 2009)
Second, when the participants were asked to describe their identities in the classrooms, they called themselves ‘Developmental Teachers’ rather than either general or special teachers. Three teachers described details.

We are required to do both roles. The way that we work out in the classroom is the lead teacher counts as both regular education and special education teacher. We are not certified those areas, but we are responsible for doing the jobs of both of those teachers. We have contract with intermediate unit. The intermediate unit contract has requested that our classroom teachers serve both roles. It is kind of the way it works in other early childhood settings in this area, the intermediate unit works with children they are in, they have a regular preschool teacher, and they sent in a special education teacher. It is very unique setting. It is that we take on both roles here, we do regular education and special education. So, that is the IU kinds of sees us all as a team and we all regular educators and we are all special educators. We just are one big collaborative team for our children. So, we are unique setting. We each have background one or the other and some of us have both, but it works a little differently here. (Individual Interview-Program Support Staff member, August 2009)

Because I am the developmental teacher, so you have to work on these developmental goals what the child inside of classrooms. I think it is just for this site because it is usually just for we consider developmental teachers with children with IEPs. So, that is what the differences. But the other children, we are just a teacher in the classroom, but we are still working on the same goals with all the children because we see different things that each child needs to work on. So, we always working on something for the children, but it is more specialized and written form through IEP that we have to work on, like two-step directions, and inviting friends to play. Even though those children need to specifically work on those areas, there is also some of the other kids need to work on as well. (Individual Interview, Lead Teacher A, August 2009)

I think I am mix of everything because I have been working with teachers our special educators and then general education. And then, I consider general education through my certificate because it is just certificate, and I have confidence in teaching. (Individual Interview, Lead Teacher B, August 2009)

Third, all participants mentioned that they took on new roles called ‘Program Support Staff member’. The importance and positive influences of this role was noted by
all participants, who mentioned it at least once in their interviews. The Director talked about the role of a substitute assistant Director in the site.

I do not have an associate Director. That is kind of some of functional her role that serve that. I am working on the business leadership side things most often. She is working on the teacher leadership side things most often. That is hard for me because I am more comfortable with teacher leadership but I am learning the business leadership. And then together, we work on both of them. So, if I have a question, I ask her. If she has parents, staff question, she asks me. We just tried work together. We can talk and see different perspectives. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

Following is the job description in detail from the Program Support Staff member.

I consider as Program Support Staff member, is my title. So, it is a new position we created last year, and I have a couple different things that I am responsible for I work with the teachers’ curriculum. So, I take the early learning standards, and the themes we come up with and I told them what standards to be addressing during the different themes. Curriculum support and curriculum direction is one of my pieces my job descriptions. And another piece is the IEP coordination, so I keep the lists of all the children and support to them have IEPs and services that they got how much time they get. And then, I work with teachers to coordinate meetings, paper works, and kind of oversee all of the paper work in meetings and services, and kind of the point person. And the third part of my role is parents support and training, and so I give parents supports and parents’ meeting, parents support groups, and parents’ bulletin board of newsletters, all of the sorts of things. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

Fourth, to cultivate one specific way of collaboration among teachers and professional development at the same time, the site is implementing a peer coaching system. The lead teacher explained it briefly.

We started peer coaching last year. You pick another teacher in the building. You have them come and observe you. You pick a topic of what you want them to see what you are doing or whatever. And they come in a couple hours like collect data with the observations. And then they talk you about after wards. And you come up with game plan together how you can improve as a teacher. So, there is that collaboration going on with other teachers in the building. It is just factual observation, like you do not say ‘great or not’. You did this and this and then you think about it. You think about it to figure out how can I approve this interaction with this
student or how can I approve my instructional teaching methods or whatever you want to work on. So, something that you choose that ‘Hey, I think I need help with this, I want you to observe me and see how I do’. It’s like self-awareness. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

Fifth, teachers at the site keep Professional Development Records (PDRs) with a thick file to hold their documents. When asked about the courses taken during her college year, one participant showed her PDR. The file included everything from college transcripts to recent in-service training information. Teachers keep track of their professional development data in the file. Lead Teacher A revealed.

We have to file them. This is our Professional Development Record (PDR). We have to keep our PDRs. We have to keep track of all our training every year. And we create a goal every year. There are a couple of pages, and I listed all of my trainings that I do in a year. And then, I have to check what standard it connects to. There is a different standard and you go to the standard, and you write whatever you beginning development mastered. And then, you write all of the trainings that support. We also keep our certificates in here, and we keep our transcripts, criminal record check, FBI clearances and all the clearances, and the first day of CPR. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

Sixth, all participants mentioned that the climate of the workforce has changed since the Director was hired a few years ago. All said it has changed the culture of the site. People who work together play the important role of leading successful collaboration among teachers. The participants noted that a good staff will produce a good collaboration at the workforce.

When I started here, that was not the case, but that also was not the model that was philosophy that was model by the Director at that time. So, it is a culture, and I think that the people we hire now, our people with that type of investment in the culture that says we are here to help one another. We are not here to compete with one another. We are here to do our job and help children. And I think they do a really great job. I think sometimes we all get overwhelmed but I think they all do a good job and saying 'I am overwhelmed, so I need you to take this kids today' or 'I need you to deal with this phone call today because I am overwhelmed'. This is the best
staff we have had in a long time. It may happen, but I guess the best thing that I can say is because we have such a good staff. (Individual Interview-the Director, August 2009)

The lead teachers A and B also supported what the Director said, but pointed the important role of the Director in creating a good workforce climate.

I think that when I talk about the site not always being as collaborative as it is now, I think the Director has a lot to do it. I think that because she once was a teacher, she is very respectful of her teachers. She has always been very open to have therapists in the building and in the classroom that was not always the situation. So I think the Director has a lot to do with. (Individual Interview-Lead Teacher A, August 2009)

And whereas in the past, we had in the past where people just walked out and not tell you anything. So, there is a big rack of communication. The Director at that time was not as, I guess collaborative with everyone as well. So, we saw big difference from then. And what the changes of the Director, the changes of teachers in the building, and then even the therapists in the building, and from the outside agencies and inside agencies, all that is just different because there is more communication. We are pretty flexible. We are all multi tasks somewhere or the other. (Individual Interview-Lead Teacher B, August 2009)

Seventh, as shown in figure 5, there were many different titles for teachers. For communication among teachers, multiple meetings were held on the site such as staff meetings, therapist meetings, staff and therapist meetings, lead teacher meetings, assistant teacher meetings, and so forth. Teachers said that they exchanged information, developed professional careers, solved problems, and got opinions from each other formally and informally in those meetings. Also, all participants agreed that collaboration with other teachers was mainly achieved through meetings. One participant noted the correlation between teacher meetings and collaboration.

We have regular meetings, so we need to adjustment. We meet every week, particularly on Wednesday as team of teachers and all of therapists. We sit down and talk about particular children. We talk about what people's work is coming up, what meetings, and any issues the parents brought up, so
deal out that way. I also meet the lead classroom teachers about every other week, and we talk about curriculum, we talk about particular student's behavior issues that everybody might to collaborate on. And there are a lot of informal collaborations. This is a small school, so teachers chat at the playground, teachers chat in here, teacher's room while eating lunch. There is a lot going on, and there is a lot have through emails. I am sure that each other often emails and say, 'I am not so sure how to work with this goal or how to work on this'. There is a high level of collaboration happening in here. It is just mixed with formal and informal collaborations. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

All participants linked the meetings they have at the site to the questions that contained collaboration, conflict, solving problems, and communication. Lead Teacher B responded that the role of meetings control or solve a conflict.

We have therapists meetings, therapists and teachers meetings, parents and teachers meetings, and so that we are getting collaboration with parents, therapists, and teachers, trying to work as one. And if there is a conflict in one area, we go back to the other group and discuss where the conflict is. And then, we need to bring it everyone together and sit down as a team meeting. And then, also communication across board with your assistant teachers and the other teachers in the building, so they know what is going on. We have therapists and teachers meeting, so it is like the OT, PT, and speech therapists meet with teachers, the lead teachers. And then whenever those meetings done, the lead teachers are to transfer the information, if it is relevant to your assistant teachers, so everybody is on the same page. We also have transition meetings which go with that parents involved, school districts are involved. We also do transition the kindergarten meetings. Whereas we go to school district and meet with the school district. We do behavior specialists meetings which mean different behavior specialists from different agencies that have, like TSS in the classrooms. So, we have those meetings, and a lot of times those meetings, we have with parents as well. And we also have staff meetings. That means all the teachers and the Director in this building. We meet at least once a month for about an hour and half to two hours, and discuss issues what is coming up that moth, just information we all need to know. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

Last, none of the participants in this study have ECE degrees. This does not mean that they are not qualified as ECE teachers, because they all certified in ECE according to
state regulation. During the interviews, participants provided information about their
degrees as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. The Degrees of the Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Degree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>Elementary and Deaf Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>Special Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>Special Education/Occupational Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>Bible, Health, and Physical Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>Human Development &amp; Family Study/ Physical Therapy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE PARTICIPANTS

1. The Backgrounds of the Teachers

The Director of the setting, when asked to provide a list of teachers who would be
potential interviewees for this study, sent a list of eight teachers, including their years of
teaching experiences and their college backgrounds, which indicate special or general
education background, for instance, Nicole White (A pseudonym) – Regular Ed and
Special Ed Background (7 years experience), Vicky Carroll (A pseudonym) – Special
Education and Occupational Therapy (15 years experience – approximately), and so on.
In order to hear a variety of rich experiences in inclusion education and the pre-service
trainings in both fields, this researcher selected the Director, two teachers from a general
education background, and two teachers from a special education background, all with at
least 5 years of teaching experiences. The original teachers’ list from the Director appears
in Table 7.
Table 7. Potential Participant List (N=8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Academic Background</th>
<th>Years of Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher A*</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>General Ed.</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher B*</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Special Ed.</td>
<td>15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher C*</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>General Ed.</td>
<td>7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher D</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Special Ed.</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher E*</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Special Ed.</td>
<td>15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Special Ed.</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher G*</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>General Ed.</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher H</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>General Ed.</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * indicated the selected participants for this study

Five teachers were selected from the list: A, B, C, E, and G. However, while I was interviewing and observing teachers in the setting, a therapist became curious about the study and volunteered for it. She was interviewed, but she was not in the focus group interview (held before the individual interviews.) The selected interviewees included the Director, the program coordinator, two lead teachers, and two therapists in the setting (N=6). Below are the descriptions of the six teachers, including backgrounds and experiences.

The Director

At the beginning of the interview, the Director was asked about her experiences as a teacher, from her college education to the present.

My background is elementary and deaf education in my undergraduate studies, and at that time, it was taught in just special education settings. The thing landing me in early education was an internship. I also had to do two placements, one on regular ed. and one on special ed. setting. I did my
regular ed. in 3rd grade and I did not like it. I did not enjoy regular setting (laugh) and did not enjoy 3rd grade very much, and then my special ed. setting placement was in a kindergarten all deaf children and then I loved it. And then I got my first job in a deaf placement for preschoolers. And from that point, that is what I wanted to work, so I went out to teach in the home in the birth to 3 populations. Before I am moving here which point now I pursuing my Master in early education. There I would not say I am learning about the curriculum alone, I am learning about the research, methodology, family involvement, play, the importance of play. I am learning a lot about history, but so far we haven’t talk about curriculum. (Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

I never utilized my elementary education degree. I did my internship in regular ed. classroom, and I did the other half of my internship in a deaf kindergarten classroom. I really connected with younger population. So, I stayed on that track, but I taught deaf education for the first year of my life, but I want to go back to learn more about early education because I love this but, for sure, there is rough knowledge that I do not have which let me to pursuit my ECE degree which I am still doing and feel like I am going to be doing forever (laughed) because I only do one class at a time. I took my special ed. test, I took the exam. I passed it, but what was told that deaf education no longer qualifies as special education in this state. And I am not teaching as just deaf population, I chose not take that test. So, I just have elementary right now. I hope to have my ECE certificate this time next year. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

To summarize, she was selected not only as a teacher but also as the Director of the setting. She did not have an early childhood education background, but instead has a degree in elementary education and deaf education. However, she is currently in pursuit of an ECE masters degree.

The Program Support Staff

One of the former lead teachers in the setting changed her status, becoming a program coordinator. Here is how she described herself during the two interviews.

My background is special education, but here I am actually curriculum support and IEP support. I started with elementary education major and
add special education. And anything specifically related to early childhood education. Basically, we learned all of the ages. Because I was dual majors when I get student teaching, I did two placements, but they were both be able to be the elementary level. (Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

I worked, summer between my freshman and sophomore year, the camp for children with special needs, and I loved it and decided that I want to do for students. So, I have two teaching certifications, and I also have minor that I graduated in music education. This is my 13th year, variety of different places. I have a lot of additional coursework, but I do not have Masters or anything like that. I have two children to maintain, it is hard to focus on one advanced degree, so I had extra credits for you have to continue coursework, but no specific Masters or anything. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

As she mentioned, she is a busy mother of two as well as a teacher. She also has two roles in the setting, one as a teacher and the other as a parent of one of the children in the setting. Her son, who has a physical disability, was in the setting until last year and has transferred to another kindergarten just as his other classmates did. Here is how she talked about her son during the interview. The question asked was, “When do you feel teaching in inclusive education is worthwhile?” Her answer included her son’s story.

My son actually, I have a 7-year old, who has cerebral palsy. He is in a wheelchair. He has got a lot of physical delays, but he has no cognitive delays. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

The researcher remembered that this staff member was a classroom teacher the previous year, and had just given birth to her second son. She was asked if that would be a reason for changing her title to the program coordinator, and she answered.

Part of it was because I had a baby and I just wanted to say it is involved. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

Her role had changed from that of a classroom teacher to the program coordinator, supporting the other teachers in many ways. She was also the connection between the Director and the teachers.
Lead Teacher A

When I was volunteering in the setting, I mostly worked with Lead Teacher A, who is completing her masters in special education. During the focus group interview and the individual interview, she described her background.

From my undergraduate, I focused on health and physical education, and also bible. And so, to be prepared for special education for having students with special needs in my classroom, we did not really have any specific courses available at my college. (Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

For here, being in an inclusive setting, I had to get in my confidence because I am not certified yet for special education, but at this point, I am in student teaching, and I will be done in December with my Master’s of education in special education. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

I was also teaching at the high school level, so that was quite different. And I was teaching Health and Physics which is very different from preschool. But, at that point, I did not really see how our students included much. I did have some students in a classroom that had IEPs, but the special educator was in charge of them. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

When probed about her college education, she spoke about how she came to the field of early childhood. Her major is Bible studies, and she noted that God showed her way and brought her to this point. She also mentioned her recent enrollment in special education for her master’s degree.

I switched from general education to special education because my first job out of college was working as the therapeutic support staff for students with special needs. I cannot go in that direction, and then I became a case manager. I just kept working with students with special needs. For me, it was God placed me on this path, and I just want to follow this path God let me on. And I just love those kids. And even when I was a general education, kids I like the best if you want to say the word where was my lower level health class because they seemed like they need a little bit more love, a little bit more attention than other people are giving to them. So, I just felt connect to them and I kind of feel the same way with these children. You create a bond with them because you work in so hard with and for them. (Individual Interview, August 2009)
During an observation period, I discovered she was going to be student teaching for her masters in special education soon, even though she had been a lead teacher previously. Her academic background was in both general and special education.

The Occupational Therapist

There were three therapists in the setting- an Occupational Therapist (OT), a Speech Therapist (ST), and a Physical Therapist (PT). The OT and the PT work part time, and all the therapists had their own rooms. Here the occupational therapist described her.

I was a special education teacher. Then I went back for my master's degree in occupational therapy. My undergraduate degree in special education was done 20 years ago. At that time, they talked a lot about mainstreaming and integration, but it was not as big part of curriculum as it is in schools now. At that time was more pull-out model. I think integrated classroom became more the thing. I taught in high schools for special education that was segregated classroom. I went there to preschool early intervention, did a little bit of birth to 3 years as well. So, in terms of what I was taught my curriculum, it was 20 years ago, so it was very different than what is happening now. And I tried to take a lot of continuing education courses, just to kind of keep up speed. (Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

Unlike she did in the focus group interview, she described more details about her work experiences during the individual interview.

I actually have undergraduate degree in special education, initially just special education. Right after graduating, I taught high school for a year that I did not really enjoy it. That was why I moved to this area and got a position working as a teacher in a pre-school, and I loved it. And I went from being a teacher in pre-school to the Director of pre-school. Somewhat like the Director’s role in this setting, but it was a smaller pre-school. And then, from there I decided I want to go back and get my graduate degree in occupational therapy. I just wanted to go back and got OT degree knowing that I want to do pediatrics. That was I always want to
do. So, I got this job currently right after graduated from OT school. And I worked for IU for 11 years now. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

She has many children in the setting. She spends three days at the setting and two days in other settings. The most interesting moment during the individual interview was when she referred to herself as an OT rather than a teacher. It was very interesting that she was so positive about it.

Currently I am not a teacher. I am currently occupational therapist. I am still teaching them, but my title is not special as a teacher. I mean my job title, I am not a teacher. But in my job, ‘Do I teach? Absolutely, and I am working with children with special needs specifically. Um…, sure, I do. I do think I am a special educator, but it is just not my job title because occupational therapist is very different from a teacher. Occupational therapy is more health related, so I cannot say I am a teacher. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

When asked about her years of teaching experience, she clearly distinguished her teaching experiences from her OT experiences (6 years of teaching and 11 years of OT).

Lead Teacher B

Every teacher came to the setting from a very different background, and Lead Teacher B had a very unique academic background.

My background is a little bit different than everybody else since I was in social work. So, in school, we did learn about different diagnosis more than anything else. We learned about the developmental ages of children birth through high school, I guess it was. And we did a lot more with family involvement, how do we get this. So that is where I first introduced to like special education, but not necessary the education part of specialized education. After high school, it just seemed that every time I was looking at the job that I was finding the job that has something with special education from working with children run always because I used to work 'storm break'. There was always some form of special education needed in the home. And so, there is a lot of, I did a lot of one or one with
children that do have diagnosed or something just helped them a little long on the progress. And then, that was how I, actually, came to here. (Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

Mostly my classes were revolved psychology and diagnosis and working with families. Then, I came here and started as an assistant teacher here and my way up to a teacher. And in order to get a certification, I had gone through series of paper work to fill up. Paper work is the Director gave me, like recommendations in order to get my certificate. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

When asked about her certification she indicated it was from the state. However, she had not taken any courses like those of other students who become teachers. She explained.

We just have to do continuing the education Classes, like trainings something like that. But since I have already like, right now going on 5 years of experiences, that is what they include more than anything else. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

She was very proud of herself as an experienced teacher, even though she did not take any general or special education classes in her college years, and she emphasized the importance of in-service training rather than the pre-service training. The Director also complimented her during the Director’s individual interview, noting that this teacher helps the Director often.

The Physical Therapist

When choosing the interviewees for this study, five teachers were selected from the list provided by the Director. However, one more teacher was added during the course of the study. She was the oldest staff member in the setting, and her condition was not well at that time. We met in the hallway outside a classroom and had a little conversation. When asked for an interview, she gladly
accepted the offer. She was the oldest teacher among my interviewees and has a long teaching history.

My education, I have school started in the 70s, 71 to 74, I went to State University in the college of Human Development. At that time, that was a new thing. I went through the early childhood education. When I applied to the university, I was except in Sociology. But my first advisor said to me, ‘You want to work with people. You do not want work with statistics’. She said ‘You need to check these other college out there. There was a new college. It is just what you need. So, I finished my degree in early childhood education, and I worked from 74 until 91. I started off teaching in Head Start program, which is the program for low income children and also children with disabilities. The middle of 80s, I decided to become a physical therapist. So, I switched my job from Head Start. At that point, I was kind of middle management in Head Start. Like I went to from a teacher up to center coordinator, and then I did a constant worker as special service advisor. Because they have some programs with special needs and disabilities in their program, my job was to go and help with IEPs (Individual Educational Plans) and to constant with teachers. I went from that job to teach at the University, and I taught that the child development lab, and I was a group supervisor there. And my job was to work with children, but also did child development research. So, while I was there, this was the middle of 80s, I was taking course. So, 91 to 93, I went to physical therapy school. And that was graduate level classes. When I was studying physical therapy, we can do the pediatric course, and then it was just like spark. And throughout the courses of my study in physical therapy, we were asked to do clinical experience, different kinds of experiences. So, I worked in a sport clinic, and I worked in a hospital. I worked with children hospital for blind children. Then I became pediatric physical therapist. It was pediatrics physical therapy. And I still continue to do pediatric physical therapy. I, just a couple years ago, I started to pursuit another degree, which was to become a teacher of visual impairment. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

She really liked to talk about her teaching experiences; and her face was full of smiles and in high speed when she talked about children she worked with. Her words lent an understanding of 1970s’ and 80s’ early childhood education.

Actually throughout my career, I have always taking in emphasis in dealing with special children. Even when I was undergraduate, we had a lot of electives in human development and a lot of ways just pursuit or create your own major. And I chose them to take a lot of courses in
education for exceptional children. That was kind of interesting back in the 70s. But most my electives were in working with exceptional children. And then, even in Head Start, like I said they had exceptional children there. I guess I always had that interest in pursuit that as well. So, I never really just focused on typical children. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

She was only teacher who originally acquired an early childhood education certificate (specifically Human Development) even though she had been inclined toward the special education field and always worked for children with special needs.

2. Job Descriptions of the Participants

During the Individual interviews, each teacher was asked to describe her job in the setting.

The Director

It is very different being the Director's role vs. classroom teacher role. I strongly believe that whether you are in the teacher's role or the Director's role, you should have a sense of shared, a leadership ability with them in the classroom. But how that is carried out is very different obviously because the end of the day in the Director's chair, I am making the decision that affects all of the teachers, all of the students. And for my teacher's perspective when I was in the classroom, I had wonderful Directors and I had lousy Directors. And then, it makes a huge difference on your enjoyment of your job and your ability to do your job and carry out your tasks. Until you have a chance to lead a parents meeting which is overwhelming at first, and even now I feel a new teacher again. And my Director's role because the parent meeting I have now is scary because I have not done with them being upset with the bills and having them to pay tuitions or them being concern about staff members. So, now I am re-learning how to approach again. I got comfortable helping them talk about their child and their child's progress. But I am dealing with other issues that are also important. (Individual Interview, August 2009)
The Program Support Staff member

My job description, I consider as Program Support Staff member, is my title. So, it is a new position we created last year, and I have a couple different things that I am responsible for. I work with all the teachers' curriculum. So, I take the early learning standards, and the themes we come up with, and I told them what standards to be addressing during the different themes. Curriculum support and curriculum direction is one of my job descriptions. And another piece is the IEP coordination, so I keep the lists of all the children and support to them have IEPs and services that they got how much time they get. And then, I work with teachers to coordinate meetings, paper works, and kind of oversee all of the paper work in meetings and services. And the third part of my role is parents support and training, and I give parents supports and parents' meeting and parents support groups, and parents’ bulletin board of newsletters, all of the sorts of things. We are going to have parents’ lending library, then I am working also. And I also support the Director, so those are all my job descriptions. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

Lead Teacher A

As any teacher, you have two plans, follow curriculum and instruction, collect data for your students who have IEPs, create IEPs, and also go to meetings, collaboration with staff in a building and outside of agencies, and let say collaboration with parents and families, and basically just making sure the kids are learning. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

The Occupational Therapist

Providing direct in service to children who have OT (Occupational Therapist) on IEP (Individual Education Plans) working with families, working with IEP teams, working actively with speech therapists, physical therapists, the vision teachers, a lot of paper work stuff. I mean that is my primary job responsibility is providing services they are indicated on the IEP. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

Lead Teacher B

We have the lead teacher which is in charge of individual education plans, communication in the families, communication with co-workers, organization of skills, planning of curriculum for the children, and then following through in the classroom on, like a structured class. That is the lead teacher. I am a lead teacher. And then as well as attend meetings regarding children, participate like fund raising events, participate the community events, and just continuing on that way. (Individual Interview, August 2009)
The Physical Therapist

As physical therapist (PT), I probably do more pull-out therapy than others (other therapists). The reason for that being is that I can be quite disruptive force in the classroom. If I take a big therapy going to the classroom, quite often all the kids want to play with me. And I am just distracting from other activities. And sometimes, I just need to use perhaps more specialized equipment, whereas say the speech therapist, can go into the classroom and do more activities, like language more things like that, or she can work with group in her area. So, I probably do more pull-out therapy. Often the TSSs come with me. It is rare case, but sometimes teachers will come to observe. I have second role. My other job is a vision teacher. So, I am half time PT and half time vision therapist at this point. As vision teacher, I do more collaboration with planning. I think you met John, a little boy who is completely blind. So, for John, there is a lot adaptation thing need to be made, and his everyday experiences, and a lot of equipment that need to be put in the classroom. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

Table 8 (following) is a revision of Table 7, provided earlier in the chapter, showing in greater detail a summarization of the teachers’ descriptions.

Table 8. The Descriptions of the Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants’ Name</th>
<th>Academic Background</th>
<th>Years in Teaching</th>
<th>Job Title in the Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1(a)</td>
<td>General Ed. (Enrolling Master in ECE)</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>The Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2(b)</td>
<td>Special Ed. (BA)</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>The Program Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3(c)</td>
<td>General Ed. (Enrolling Master in SPLED)</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>Classroom Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4(E)</td>
<td>Special Ed. (MA)</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>Occupational Therapist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5(G)</td>
<td>General Ed. (BA)</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Classroom Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6(Added)</td>
<td>Special Ed. (MA)</td>
<td>35 years</td>
<td>Physical &amp; Vision Therapist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Motivations for working in Early Childhood Inclusive program

Since teaching in inclusive programs is more complicated than teaching in segregated programs, teachers may suffer from heavy workloads and struggle over how to deal with children both with and without special needs as well as how to collaborate with other staff members. Teachers who continue to work in inclusive programs in spite of these difficulties may have personal motivations. Some participants had specific stories about why they chose to work in an inclusive program, and some had no special reason.

The Director

I really connected with younger population. So, I stayed on that track, but I taught deaf education for the first year of my life, but I want to go back to learn more about early education because I love this, but there was rough knowledge that I do not have which let me to pursue my ECE degree which I am still doing and feel like I am going to be doing forever (laughed) because I only do one class at a time. (Individual Interview-the Director, August 2009)

The Program Support Staff member

I think I have a secure view of that. Again, I am always excuse clear of some of the traditional schools where I would get paid whole a lot more money because that for me the trade off was I am willing to give up $20,000. So, I have the freedom and the flexibility of the placement, like this. I do not think it compares all, but I think for me, it is trade off. I would much rather make plus money, more say, what was going on and more flexibility do not have to follow, do not follow do thing certain way. I am sure that not everybody would give that the same answer, but I rather be happy in my job. I think when I see that the regular typical children are interacting with special needs children as they would any other kids go. My son actually, I have a 7-year old, who has cerebral palsy. He is in a wheelchair. He got a lot of physical delays, but he has no cognitive delays. He has physical delay. Sometimes when he is with his peers, some would baby him. They are padded his head, rubbed his arms, they give him hugs and kisses. And I like to see when kids treat him as any other kids. So, my favorite moment with him when I was in the
classroom here or when children didn't see the down syndrome, did not see the wheelchair, and they are just playing with those children as they are with any other children. I think that is our goal in inclusive setting is to get the children and teachers and parents and everybody do not see those disabilities. I never worked in traditional setting. Before I work here, I worked at a charter school, and then the area that was exactly the same situation what I was both curricular education and special education for the charter school. So, in my student teaching experience, I have not been in a traditional school. But I never liked the way it works. So, I was worked in the least traditional settings, like charter schools and early childhood settings, and private schools because I like how they work a lot better than how they work at traditional schools. (Individual Interview-the Program Support Staff member, August 2009)

Lead Teacher A

For me, it was God placed me on this path, and I just want to follow this path God let me on. And I just love those kids. And even when I was a general educator, kids I like the best if you want to say the word where was my lower level health class because they seemed like they need a little bit more love, a little bit more attention than other people are giving to them. So, I just felt connect to them and I kind of feel the same way with these children. You create a bond with them because you work in so hard with and for them. (Individual Interview-Lead Teacher A, August 2009)

The Occupational Therapist

Right after graduating, I taught high school for a year that I did not really enjoy it. That was why I moved to this area and got a position working as a teacher in a pre-school, and I loved it. And I went from being a teacher in pre-school to the Director of pre-school. From there I decided I want to go back and get my graduate degree in occupational therapy. I just wanted to go back and got OT degree knowing that I want to do pediatrics. I got this job currently right after graduated from OT school. And I worked for IU for 11 years now. I did not enjoy teaching in high school. I was right out the college, and it was my first job. I never wanted to teach in a high school. It was just a job I was offered. It was children with social emotional disturbances. So, I just did not enjoy the experience. Once I got into pre-school, I realized that I really love that. However, when I was teaching in pre-school, and I think I mentioned it before, yes, I have my special education degree, but I did not know how to work with three years olds. So I mentioned this before, anything I learned, I really learned on the job. I look at back when I was teaching pre-school for the first time. (Individual Interview-OT, August 2009)
Lead Teacher B

I attended social work program there. So, mostly my classes were revolved psychology and diagnosis and working with families. Then, I came here and started as an assistant teacher here and my way up to a teacher. And in order to get a certification, I had gone through series of paper work to fill up. Paper work is the Director gave me, like recommendations in order to get my certificate. (Individual Interview-Lead Teacher B, August 2009)

The Physical Therapist

I worked as a teacher. So, I taught a lot in Head Start. I started off teaching in Head Start program, which is the program for low income children and also children with disabilities. The middle of 80s, I started to think that I wanted to do something else. And I decided to become a physical therapist. I want to work with kids, and I worked with children. (Individual Interview-PT, August 2009)

Although different reasons for working in an early childhood inclusive program were apparent among the teachers, all were satisfied working for children in an inclusive program.
CHAPTER 5

INCLUSION AND ECE & SPLED PRACTICE

Chapters 5 and 6 describe how the participants in this study experienced and understood issues related to inclusion in an inclusive program context. The critical issues are professional development and collaboration of teachers in the inclusive program described in Chapter 6, addressed here as it deals with inclusion and cross-fields education (ECE & SPLED). Because these four topics—inclusion, cross-fields education in ECE and SPLED, professional development, and collaboration—are closely connected to one another, each topic generated links and interacted with the others.

When the participants talked about their teaching experiences in inclusive classrooms, they opined that teachers play two roles for children. For children without special needs, they are general education teachers, but for children with special needs they become developmental teachers. This means they need to possess cross-fields knowledge and skills.

At this point, we shall examine the fields of ECE and SPLED to see how both provide programs to meet teachers’ multiple roles in inclusive settings. All study participants agreed that the fields of ECE and SPLED are separate and need to be bridged. Accordingly, this lead to wondering how teachers in inclusive programs develop their careers to provide appropriate services for children with and without special needs and collaborate with other staff in the setting. For better understanding, Figure 4 showed the detail of the issue connections.
INCLUSION

“We are all wearing both hats here”

(The Program Support Staff member, Individual Interview, August 2009)

Throughout my volunteer experience in the child center, I found that the staff in the setting confidently called their program inclusive. Because I selected experienced participants, the data collection about inclusion was enriched. Findings demonstrated that the teachers’ perceptions of inclusion suggested the need to unify the fields of ECE and SPLED. The emergent themes are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Emergent Themes: Inclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. History</td>
<td>• Right on track, but it is still very old way of thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Definition</td>
<td>• Inclusion, but appropriately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Inclusion of the setting</td>
<td>• Balancing the two worlds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Benefits</td>
<td>• Learning and developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Difficulties</td>
<td>• Differences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **History of Inclusion**

The history of inclusion is not long in the field of education matters. It is amidst a constantly changing process with a long way to go. The study participants, who define inclusion as having at least one child with special needs in a classroom believe the word ‘inclusion’ will be eliminated someday because all children, regardless of their abilities,
will be provided the same service at the same placements. Various terms have distinguish the differences, such as segregation, inclusion, or not included.

The final study participant (physical therapist) worked in the field since 1974. She described inclusion in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s.

Head Start was really a form of inclusion and main streaming, which was we called at then. So, with Head Start, I guess I really admire that program that they did the inclusion. When I was in school, I went to school in 1959. And when I went to school, that children with special needs where in what they call ‘Annex’, which was separate building was annex from the school. And then they were known as the annex kids. And they never mixed with us. They were in separate building. They came out for lunch, but they had to sit separate. And it was actually an insult if you said something like ‘You are the annex kids’. It was a really discrimination against those children. Also nobody gets any help in early years. There was, at least in my area, perhaps a big city, there was some help, but nobody did any early intervention. These children did not even get probably diagnosed or recognized until they went into schools. By the time I started Head Start, I mean it was really innovative idea that they were accepting these children with disabilities, and mixing them into the classrooms. So, it was just starting. And I remember in some of course working with regular education teachers, and they would say how difficult it was for them because they will not train to work with those kids. All of sudden, children with disabilities were being put in their classrooms. Then, they did not know what to do for them. Sometimes a little afraid, sometimes a little angry about it because they felt like they were just being put in their classroom. They did not have help they needed. I think training was made available to them. So, it was a little bit easier. (The Physical Therapist-Individual Interview, August 2009)

She also spoke about her memories as a student. Fifty years ago, the term inclusion had not emerged. Instead, the terms ‘annex’ or ‘segregation’ were used to refer to provision of a service for children with special needs. She made a good point at the end of this dialogue that teacher’s training was made available to those teaching children with special needs in regular education settings. It is a very important point for this study that
Teacher professional development is the key to facilitate effective inclusion. Considering the 50-year gap, this participant observed that inclusion has developed a lot over time.

Now it is pretty much accepted I think. It is pretty much standard and accepted. I have always worked in pre-school, and it is more accepted although I do not going to the public schools. (The Physical Therapist-Individual Interview, August 2009)

Another participant remembered during the focus group interview when the term of inclusion started to be used in public, but she criticized the beginning of facilitating inclusion.

Actually when I was finishing up my last year of college, the local school district that have everybody had included because they decided that year to mainstream at that time that every kid no matter what, so through all the kids with disabilities no other what the disabilities for the regular classrooms. Of course special education teachers opened arms, regular education teachers opened arms, and parents opened arms. But through the mean that they did not give them tools to figure out what that meant, they just want to use that term of inclusion and mainstreaming. (The Program Support Staff member- Focus group interview, August 2009)

Likewise, the beginning of inclusion was not adequate enough to serve all children with special needs. The principal of the child center commented on the current inclusion in the U.S.

I think depending on where you are. It is just put them there and see how it works rather than put them there and give the child and the staff the right supports to make them successful participants in that education experiences whether it is early education or later in life. I worked three different states in early education. Some states definitely do better. They have better grabs of it. Then other states, but I think more globally it is still put them in the air, put them in the air for a part of the day, then, put them back in the special education setting. So, it is still very old way of thinking. I think inclusion needs a lot of work still. I think we are on the right track. I think the staff just I have here, who are going to stay forever? I know that, but hopefully they going to go out, they going to educate the next person that they will meet the next places they go on. How great it is, and why it is so worthwhile. (The Director-Individual Interview, August, 2009)
Like the physical therapist, the Director acknowledged that inclusion in the U.S. has progressed significantly from its inception and is worthwhile for children with and without special needs. However, she pointed out that still there is a far way to go until education in the U.S. achieves the real meaning of inclusion. The physical therapist, remembering a 50-year history, felt inclusion had developed a lot; the Director looked at it differently, saw more details, and noted the lack of facilitating inclusion in recent years although commented that the program is on the right track. The Director believed that many parents of children with and without special needs still have old-fashioned thinking against inclusion. This made her emphasize parents and community education.

They are scare still. And we still have more education to do of parents in general. The parents who have typical children here, they love it because they want their children to have this experience. The parents of children with special needs wish that we had more typical children. I have had an interesting shift this year. I had parents called that have typical children and they had a lot of questions. They were very concern about the special education piece. I have also had parents, a couple parents but, one in particular called this year. She was very further here. Her daughter has a spinal bifida, and she said to me 'My child is not that disable that she needs to go to your program'. So even the children with special needs are now, the parents are, some of them now thinking, well in order for my child to make it, they need to be fully included with just typical children. So, I think we have to educate parents better. We have to educate other community providers better. And we also have to help community to understand that if parent of children with special needs is calling me and says 'I want more typical setting'. Then they are going to go to you. So, you need to be prepared. I mean something's we have done or definitely within the marketing piece or trying to keep our website update, and then formative, more trying to reach out to NAEYC because NAEYC has the new position statement of inclusion. (The Director-Individual Interview, August, 2009)

The Director commented on what parents of children without special needs are worried about when they put their children in inclusive programs.
The parents of typical children tend to worry about two things, one is my child is going to chat it. 'Are they are going pick up bad behaviors?' 'Are they going to come home doing things that a lower functioning than they currently are?' And, 'Are the teachers are going be able to give my child enough time?' because I think sometimes as inclusive special education educators can forget that. Just because of typical parents does not mean that they are not just scared or just concern about really little things with their typical child as special needs parents is about there, special needs child. And then for parents of children with special needs, their biggest concern is if you do not have enough typical peers for my child, is my child not going to thrive as much as they could. All understandable concerns, absolutely, but they are all hard to overcome. It may happen, but I guess the best thing that I can say is because we have such a good staff, they are going to set the bar really high and they are going to show the child, the autistic child, let's say. They are going to stop that behavior, and then they are going to show to the classroom that is not exceptive behavior. So they are going to improve behavior strategies that we are going to benefit the whole, not just a part. And they are also going to address the child who is going to imitate because the typical child is going to imitate, they are not just imitate at home. They are going to imitate in the classroom. And that is what a big responsibility on the staff. They have to be able to manage all the behaviors and manage the imitated behaviors, but my experience here over the 7 years here, yes, occasionally typical child would imitate specifically the behaviors, but once they see that child be corrected and they are corrected, they do not continue. It is something to try, they are curious. If a child makes funny noise, maybe a typical child is going to make that noise. And maybe the classroom teacher is going to say, 'Ok, let's all make funny noise right now', and then it will be done. And just not pay so much attention to it. 'Ok, we all make funny noise, now we're done, and now we have to go to the circle, or we have to go out'. It is just the matter how you address it as a parent and a teacher, and talking to one another about it. (The Director-Individual Interview, August, 2009)

The director explained what parents of both children with and without special needs typically worry about when they send their children into inclusive programs in the aspect of educating parents. She indicated that parents are over thinking, that there is nothing to be concerned about, and she pointed out the role of teacher to solve the worries of parents.

Two participants, one with the longest work experiences among the participants and the other with wide view of inclusion because of her rank, addressed the history and
the current stage of inclusion. In summary, inclusion is in processing toward in progress. Since the definition of inclusion is not fixed as one whole dictionary meaning, it is very important that each educator define inclusion his/her own because teacher’s perception of inclusion may affect their teaching in educational settings. In each individual interview, I asked the participants to define inclusion in their own way of thinking.

2. Definition of Inclusion

Not all early childhood settings are required to be inclusive, and the meaning of inclusion itself is not quite settled at this point. Teachers’ perceptions of inclusion are a key to understanding it. In focus group and individual interviews, the participants were asked to define inclusion from their own points of view. In the focus group interview, there was active sharing of ideas among participants. When one mentioned something, others agreed on that idea and added their own opinions. First of all, the participants pointed to participation and including both children with and without special needs.

It is not just the inclusion of these children together, but full participation of these children. It just because the child has CP (Cerebral Palsy) or Spina Bifida, and they are in the classroom does not make inclusive, but their active participation make inclusive. (The Director-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

The Program Support Staff member agreed with the Director.

I definitely agree with the Director. It means more than just having a class of mixed abilities in there. I mean actually making sure that the best placement, and that making sure that everybody has right tools to make positive experience. (The Program Support Staff member-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)
The OT gave her opinion.

From a therapist perspective, I think that some way needs to be put on therapists who are occasionally come into the classroom do not always single out the kids they need to work with. Including all of the kids is a fun activity that is therapists to see that child. There is no reason that you cannot provide activities that beneficial for all of the kids. (The OT-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

The Director replied.

That is a very interesting point because I think we were all agreed that it is a great therapist that here only sometimes take everybody. So they are including individuals who are typical children. We did have an incidence this year that parents with a typical daughter. She was participating in a therapy session, and her mother didn't know about it. And then she came in and said 'it is not that I am upset, but I would have known a head time, I do not want my child participating with leaving where she was.' So I think that is another piece of it is. We really need to make sure we were giving parents that are participating inclusion clear idea of what that means that it is full inclusive we are going let them participate whether typical or child with special needs across curriculum including the therapists. (The Director-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

The Director corrected what the OT said, concerned about a possible misunderstanding of their system. When therapists include typically developing children in therapy sessions, they must have permissions from parents. However, this OT casually included typically developing children in classrooms when the children want to play with the therapists. The Director also mentioned that inclusion also mean ‘collaboration with families’.

One another thing, I think the other piece, we have seen that is really nice inclusive setting is collaboration between families. (The Director-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

The OT pointed out that inclusion is not appropriate to all children, and it depends on the child’s condition. The Director agreed with the OT, adding an observation about children without special needs.

It depends on the child. I think that the best appropriate education for the child, sometimes that is taking the child out of the classroom, sometimes
they need to be individual education out of, away from other children sometimes. I think that's an impossible question to answer because it is different for every child. (The OT-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

I think even for the typical children, there are children who might be better served in Montessori schools rather than in inclusive classrooms or in a typical preschool center. So, even for the typical children depend on the child. (The Director-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

There was a little different point of view on inclusion between the participants who have special education backgrounds and those who have general education backgrounds. The former are the therapists, mainly dealing with children with special needs and the latter are the lead teachers, dealing with children both with and without special needs. The question of defining inclusion was emerged again in individual interviews to find out the details of the differences between the two groups of educators (the therapists and the lead teachers) and also get more various opinions of teachers who did not mentioned anything about defining inclusion in the focus group interview. At first, the OT defined inclusion.

I think it is making sure that all children had access to the best education they can have, and children are together. I am talking about children with disabilities and without disabilities to extend that is safe, beneficial to all of the children. Children are best serve if they are receiving a service in educational classrooms. I think that is appropriate sometimes. I think looking at the place of classroom or school by itself does not necessary as much as what is going in the buildings. My opinion is that if the teachers not really do IEP and all the kids are afraid to go near this kid because he is different and he is kind of left to do his own things, that is not an inclusion. He maybe there but, that is not an inclusion. Because for those populations for the children with severe autism, I think those segregated classroom can sometimes very appropriate. I think children with very severe physical disabilities, those segregated classroom can be appropriate, depending on the child, depending on their needs. Luckily the segregated classrooms I have worked in, I think have been chosen appropriated. They are children who really need it, and extremely structured routine and extremely structured classroom. And I was luckily that they were very appropriate, I think in those situations were appropriate to have these
children in segregated classrooms. But again I was working with educators who knew what they are doing, and when they saw the child with making progress, the first thing they did was ‘ok, now we are going to spend an hour a day in a regular classroom, and then two hours a day’. So, the goal was always to integrate them. But we try to teach them the goals they would need to be integrated in a segregated setting. (The OT-Individual Interview, August 2009)

The PT said.

I think there are some children, and I am thinking about some other children that I work with very severe, multiple disabilities that their needs are actually better meet sometimes at home if they are medically frazzle. And sometimes in a special classroom where they can learn at their own functional level in the individualize setting. I mean some of children that I have worked with their cognitive skills would not be ready for the first grade, then why would they be in a first grade classroom? It is waist of their time. And you cannot expect them or the class to try to make match there. So, I think especially for the children with extreme multiple disabilities that that is important. They have their own specialized class that they can be physically comfortable, and it can really be gear to their level of development. And I think that even those children do not need to be completely separate, in other words, they can be included for certain activities and certain experiences. So, they are not excluded from other children. And I think that would be the extreme that probably those children would be need to be separated the most, but as you go up with level of skills or level of abilities, more and more inclusion can occur. Some children, they are included 100% in the classroom. (The PT-Individual Interview, August 2009)

In addition, the Program Support Staff member (also with a special education background) mentioned, as did the therapist, that inclusion appropriately depends on the child.

My definition of inclusion is children who benefit from being around typical peers, and participating in typical school activities, typical education activities with some adaptations of activities, but I think the participation is what makes inclusion, not just being there but be able to participate to be part of the activities or their curriculum. I am not saying that all, but I think it is on individual bases. So, I think rather than saying every single child just has to be included, I think looking at individual base, ‘Is this child ready or not’. If not, they need to be alternatives. The state really pushes a little hard now for all children to be included in early
childhood setting, and again, I agreed that is the fantastic goal for all children. I just do not think all children are ready to meet that goal. By the way, we had some children who come here. We have a lot of experiences here with special needs children, but this is not an appropriate place for them. I mean that should be in a classroom where there were four children that is it, and a special education teacher, and a specialized techniques before they are ready to come here. So, it needs to be continuum, and I do not think everybody sees as continuum. We talked about the least restrictive environment, and we talked about moving the continuum, and not starting the most restrictive. I think some children need to take a while to get there. So I worry that we go to special education meeting from department of education, and they are saying no more special education classes, no special education classes, and there should be all included classes. That worries me. (The Program Support Staff member-Individual Interview, August 2009)

She made a critical point. There was pressure for inclusion no matter what, and she was concerned about it because some children require more professional facilitation and individualized settings for their severe disabilities. Inclusion itself is not the goal, but rather how well children are included is the ultimate objective for inclusion. The Program Support Staff member added her personal experiences with a critical view.

I think sometimes people just use the words 'inclusion or include children', just for the sake of saying that they are doing inclusion. I think when it is done well, when it is collaborating, when those children actually participate in, getting something out of inclusion. I think that is good thing. I think that kids surround together, again for the sake of saying that it is an inclusive program is not a good thing. Some of my son's school district, for example, for right now ‘no’, that is not early childhood. But there are some preschools, some IUs, and some different places. Just say that every child needs to be in included, and I think that is not practical for some children. I think that is an end goal, but I think not all children are ready to be in inclusive setting. We have more severe needs, they might more sense of health committees provided inclusive settings. So, I think it is a great goal for everyone in the United States say children are going to be included and participate equally, but I think that the way we get there. (The Program Support Staff member-Individual Interview, August 2009)
She ended with an interesting point, when she defined inclusion to mean that teachers need to pursue attempts to include all children and get them participate equally, although there are some children who need to be separated in order to receive their appropriate services.

On the other hand, the lead teachers who kept silent in the focus group interview insisted in their individual interviews that inclusion includes children no matter what their abilities. Interestingly, they answered very briefly to the question of defining inclusion.

Let say a classroom environment where both typical and atypical students are learning side by side. Our students, we needed inclusion setting which we hope everyone gets in inclusive setting. That will be ideal. That would be the ideal. I would think they would, all the teachers should have backgrounds that has more on collaboration, more on behavior management, and more on teaching students both for the general education setting and special education setting whatever that course work would be. (Lead Teacher A-Individual Interview, August 2009)

It is working with children in all abilities. That is my definition, and including their families. That is it. (Lead Teacher B-Individual Interview, August 2009)

All participants agreed inclusion is more than just a placement matter, and they all stressed participation of children with and without special needs. In individual interviews, the participants with general education backgrounds had brief and general definitions of inclusion, while those with special education backgrounds defined very specific and descriptive qualities of inclusion. The therapists commented on more various contexts of inclusion because they worked not only in inclusive settings but also segregated settings and home teaching settings with children with severe disabilities. On the other hand, the lead teachers only worked with children having special needs in their classrooms, missing the opportunity to work with children having severe disabilities who cannot come to
classrooms to learn with other peers. This fact suggests that teachers need to be exposed to children in diverse contexts, and professional development is one way to help achieve this.

3. Inclusion of the Setting

To learn a practical way of facilitating inclusion, it is necessary to explore the reality of inclusion in the setting. Actually, all information the participants for this study told in their interviews was based on their real experiences in the inclusive program. During each interview, the participants often described their inclusive program in the setting and gave examples about what they experienced in the setting. In Chapter 4, some of the uniqueness of the inclusive program’s setting was introduced. Here, more practical inclusive program is explained and the differences from other settings where inclusion is not the major concern are noted. First, all participants confirmed that the center is an inclusive program. Lead Teacher A described how other settings are different from theirs, calling them general education classrooms.

Special educators come to classroom, but there was also a resource room at the school. During different times of the day, students go to the resource room, like Math and English, and that is how that worked out. Based on the period, they go somewhere else rather than the special educators really never come to the classroom. The hard part of that was I did not know ‘what is the level of kids, where they are support to be in the resource room.’ But just go in these kids come in random periods and they are just support work on homework from regular education classes, but then we were supporters. So, basically just seemed like was tutoring or homework support. I did not really feel that was really meeting the needs of students. The big difference is it is more individualized in the inclusive setting. I think general educators they forget to individualized, they forget to change their methods, and they forget to change their instructional styles so that each student is being reaches. But here, we see more of ‘this works for the student, this one not work for that student, I have to adapt this for this
student and I have to change for that student’. So, we see this student as individual rather as whole class, rather as whole group. Then, I think there is more support, but general educators are on their own. In the most settings, they still the special educators one that holds the IEPs and control over it, so general educator just has to give their present levels and show to the meeting basically. But their adaptation or modification in classroom, but they do not have to just write IEP. So maybe that is why they do not teach in college. I think everyone should know. (Lead Teacher A-Individual Interview, August 2009)

Lead Teacher A pointed out several differences between inclusive setting and other early childhood settings; (1) other settings just have resource rooms for children with special needs, and this may limit teachers from better understanding the children; (2) other settings are not as individualized; (3) other settings allow only special educators to hold IEPs and control them. Thus, Lead Teacher A implied that the center is a completely inclusive program and includes children with all abilities, and all teachers know them well. Next, the center provides well-structured individual service for each child appropriately. Last, both special educators and lead teachers share IEP responsibilities. When Lead Teacher A mentioned different types of teachers or settings, she used the third person subjective ‘they’. When we use the third person subjective, it means that the person who used ‘they’ does not belong to the third person subjective, like ‘I’ does not belong to ‘they’. It all reflected that the role of teachers in the setting is somewhat different than other settings where inclusive education is not the main theme such as regular public settings. The participants described their roles in their interviews.

We are required to do both roles. The way that we work out in the classroom is the lead teacher counts as both regular education and special education teacher. We are responsible for doing the jobs of both of those teachers. We do regular education and special education. We all regular educators and we are all special educators. I know it kind of makes tricky when you were talking ‘are you regular or special ed.’, ‘Yes, we each have background one or the other and some of us have both, but it works a little
differently here. (Individual Interview-Program Support Staff member, August 2009)

Because I am the developmental teacher, so you have to work on these developmental goals what the child inside of classrooms. I think it is just for this site because it is usually just for we consider developmental teachers with children with IEPs. So, that is what the differences. But the other children, we are just a teacher in the classroom, but we are still working on the same goals with all the children because we see different things that each child needs to work on. So, we always working on something for the children, but it is more specialized and written form through IEP that we have to work on, like two-step directions, and inviting friends to play. Even though those children need to specifically work on those areas, there is also some of the other kids need to work on as well. (Individual Interview, Lead Teacher A, August 2009)

I think I am mix of everything because I have been working with teachers our special educators and then general education. And then, I consider general education through my certificate because it is just certificate. We are all developmental teachers in a classroom. We are, teachers and also developmental teachers. (Individual Interview, Lead Teacher B, August 2009)

The lead teachers called themselves developmental teachers for children with special needs, and teachers for children without special needs. This fact illustrated two important points; (1) teachers play both roles although they have specific degrees in one area; (2) teachers differentiate between children without special needs and children with special needs. Putting these two points together, teachers of inclusive programs need cross-fields education to provide appropriate services for children with all abilities. This also connects with teacher professional development, described in the following chapter.

The participants were very excited when they told stories about children they were teaching and the program. The stories from the participants reflected different approaches to inclusion.

The state really pushes a little hard now for all children to be included in early childhood setting, and again, I agreed that is the fantastic goal for all
children. I just do not think all children are ready to meet that goal. By the way, we had some children who come here. We have a lot of experiences here with special needs children, but this is not an appropriate place for them. I mean that should be in a classroom where there were four children that's it, and a special education teacher, and a specialized techniques before they're ready to come here. (The Program Support Staff member-Individual Interview, August 2009)

The Program Support Staff member admitted that although the program is represented as an early childhood inclusive program, it is sometimes not appropriate for some children with especially severe disabilities. This suggests that the program pursues an appropriate and flexible way of inclusion, not the practice of inclusion no matter what.

The other thing that we rock a fine line on here is 'do we look like a special ed. setting?' or 'do we look like a typical pre-school that welcomes and does a nice job of in cooperating children with special needs?' And that is hard because I think someday we look like a special ed. setting, and someday and some years we look like a pre-school, but does really great job with special ed. children. So, it is helping to learn what the rest of the world is doing, and then bring it here and seeing how I can help our teachers to find the balance between the two worlds. (The Director-Individual Interview, August 2009)

The Director mentioned that the program is trying to balance ECE and SPLED in practice. Balancing is the key. If an inclusive program looks like either a general or a special program, it is not practicing inclusion appropriately or correctly. What the Director meant was that an inclusive program does not look like either general nor special programs but needs to include both practices equally.

I cannot put my finger on it other than we have a great group of people who really love their jobs who loved kids, who adore each other. It is just the dynamics there. I worked at this setting 8 years ago when the staff was completely different. It was not always that. It was not always like that. I attribute to the staff. I attribute to the individual we are working with because it was not always like that. (The OT-Individual Interview, August 2009)
The participants noted that whom you are working with is also important for inclusion to succeed. All of the participants mentioned at least once about previous people they worked with that did not get along well. Human resources are as important as teaching practices to facilitate high quality inclusion.

They actually pull children that are typical developing children, and do therapy with parent’s permission with a child with specialized instruction. It works on communication within, like children just show that the children that need a little bit more extra that you can do it. You can eventually get there. So, it works really nice without therapists because they do a lot of, like group therapy, and they will just choose children out of the classroom that really need it. And work on a parachute game. Everybody grabs or holds the parachute, and swings up and down. That could be OT for the day, but also it could be cooperated speech as well because you can learn the color of the parachute. And so, just getting the child with special needs, even mimic the other child instead the adults. That is even really good to see. It is more focus on the child with special needs, but what they could be a child and there typically developed that might need to work on the same goal. Even though the therapy is not really focus on specifically for typically developing child, it might help them in the future as well. (Lead Teacher B-Individual Interview, August 2009)

We see more of ‘this works for the student, this one not work for that student, I have to adapt this for this student and I have to change for that student’. So, we see this student as individual rather as whole class, rather as whole group. And I think that is the biggest difference. Then, I think there is more support. (Lead Teacher A-Individual Interview, August 2009)

All participants were concerned for all children, no matter what their abilities. Even the therapists, who were not in charge of children without special needs, they tried to include them in their therapy sessions to realize true inclusion. Interestingly, all staff members knew every single child’s name. Often children from two or three classrooms played together on the playground, and teachers and therapists joined in with their children. In line with the Director’s comment about balancing, the OT tried to balance two worlds.
The following event was observed with the OT. When she had a therapy session with a special needs child, she brought a string toy with her. She explained how to play and played with the child. When a group of the child’s peers showed interest, the therapist expanded the individual play to a group play so that all children could join the therapy session. This kind of scene happened not only in therapy sessions but also in other contexts such as free play time, playground activity, and circle time.

4. Benefits of Facilitating Inclusion

At each interview, I tried to speak less and instead, I encouraged the participants to speak more about themselves and the program. As a result, I asked with a line of questions and the participants answered with 10, 20, or 30 lines. It was not because they were all talkative. The reason for that was the enthusiasm of the participants to teach in an inclusive program. What made the participants talk so much? The answer could be that benefits of inclusion and teaching in an inclusive setting provide a very rewarding job. Here, the benefits of inclusion and the favorable moments of teaching in the setting were examined.

My son did not go here when he was younger, but he spent a lot of time here. And one of his best friends right now, and he is typically developed child, and one of his best friends right now is a boy at the street who has down syndrome, and he does not even think about it. I just think that a lot of these kids who are having play with other kids, they are just getting such a wonderful head starts. They really are. (The OT-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

I actually just love seeing them learn from each other. I actually left doing (eternal) work while I was doing one to one at home which is very important, but it was not satisfying me as an educator. I wanted, I missed a piece of seeing them and then peers, and helping another as well as they
are together. That was the best I mean. (The Director-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

Rachel said very nice talking about her son. To see her son later his life, now he has a friend with down syndrome, they don't have that fear fact anymore. They view children as that's just another child. They do not see disabilities. They just view them as just their friends. And so, I would say, that is a huge benefit here. And to know that they are learning in both ways. It is not just children with disabilities, and they are learning from typical children. They are learning in both ways. (Lead Teacher A-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

I think one of the benefits for the children with special needs here is, from my son's experience, he was treated like a kid here. He was not treated as disability. People did not see his disability first here. When the Director and Lead Teacher B were teachers for him, they had the same expectations that they had for other kids in that class too. And obviously they made adaptations for him, and they made him work, but he got to participate and everything for 3, 4 and 5 years all do despite of his disability. I think that is a big benefit for kids to help them, see themselves, to help the parents see their children, to help other people see them as kids first. And I think then we try to really hard when our kids go on from here to continue that so on, then my son went school, and we pushed really hard for people to see him as a kid, and put him in a typical kindergarten setting. And I think that is a big benefit for our kids here. They are not treated as kids with disabilities, not have separation from everybody else. In the classroom, they are just kids to learn and experience. (The Program Support Staff member-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

I think when I see that the regular typical children are interacting with children with special needs as they would any other kids go. My son actually, I have a 7-year old, who has cerebral palsy. He is in a wheelchair. He got a lot of physical delays, but he has no cognitive delays. He has physical delay. Sometimes when he is with his peers, some would baby him. They are padded his head, rubbed his arms, they are give him hugs and kisses. And I like to see when kids treat him as any other kids. So, my favorite moment with him when I was in the classroom here or when children did not see the down syndrome, did not see the wheelchair, and they are just playing with those children as they are with any other children. I think that is our goal in inclusive setting is to get the children and teachers and parents and everybody do not see those disabilities. (The Program Support Staff member-Individual Interview, August 2009)
When the participants talked about the benefits of inclusion, their faces were full of smiles and some even had tears. That is why they work at the center. Especially, the program support staff had a son who need special needs, she provided what her son was benefited by being in inclusive program through her experiences. Children both with and without special needs acquire social, emotional, and moral learning skills for living together, not only now but also for later in their lives.

The participants also shared their favorite moments teaching. When they were talking about these, they were smiling and their voices grew higher.

I think my favorite part is watching each child’s goal and do reach something that they have tried all year, and all the sudden, look at you (clapping her hands once) and say completed sentence ( she was all smile on her face). Just do tiny remembrance, it is just like my favorite thing. I am like, 'Ye~'. I just get so excited and then you just give them the biggest hug. (Lead Teacher B-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

I agree with 100 percents. I mean their success is become our success, and it makes our day. We see a kid writes his name as the first. It is just crazy. (Laughed again). (The OT- Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

It has been exciting for me just see kids because I have been here for a while, so seeing the kids from they started and then you think "Oh...they all going to get that point", and then we see them now getting ready to head off to kindergarten. How similar the kids done on, they have gone on from here, and they are continue to success knowing that we kind of helping to provide them the foundation to go, to do similar things that they are doing that. (The Program Support Staff member-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

I actually just love seeing them learn from each other, and helping another as well as they are together. That was the best I mean. (The Director- Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

The participants shared their personal stories, and they laughed and talked with other participants about the moments they had. The benefits and their favorite moments were
not grandiose, but the enthusiasm of the participants showed. The participants were satisfied and touched with when their children developed and changed even a little.

5. **Difficulties of Facilitating Inclusion**

Since inclusion is not a settled concept yet and many people still have an old-fashioned way of thinking, the participants encountered difficulties when they facilitated inclusion in their classrooms. First, from the focus group interview;

> Collaboration between families is really critical for typical children. (The Director-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

The Director mentioned parents’ collaboration but suddenly stopped and turned to different topics.

> What is the most difficult is that you have to find out what are so challenging or other learning tasks for the students who are typical, and yet you still have to meet the needs of your child who has the least amount of abilities. (Lead Teacher A-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

Since there are children with mixed needs in the same classroom, the teachers must care for all of them equally. This makes heavy workloads for the classroom teachers, and they considered it as one of difficulties in inclusive education.

> The Director seconded the lead teacher’s opinion.

> Or their adaptation baseline. They might be cognitively just fine, but what adaptation level placed be successful. (The Director-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

> Yes, right. While you are working on one specific goal for the whole class, there is difficulty lies and how to get each student to meet that goal, and what does it take adaptations or modifications for that students to reach that goal. (Lead Teacher A-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

> I think big difficult for me is the individualized attention to the children in general. It is these children with special needs who give them so much
attention, I feel then you do like typical child. And so it is trying to find balance between how much attention should I give this child compare to that child. (Lead Teacher B-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

Personally I did not feel that I was able to meet everyone's needs at the same time. I never figured out the way to do that. I much better looking at one or two kids at a time and focusing on them right then. So just the first hand, I think that it is difficult, so difficult to be able to meet the needs of each kid in a classroom. I do not have answers for it. (The OT-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

For teachers, teaching and meeting goals for every child, no matter what each child’s ability, is the most difficult aspect of working in inclusive programs. Teacher professional development and collaboration among different types of teachers can help to solve this difficulty. The Program Support Staff member commented on the heavy workload.

I think one of my biggest challenges that because I was in the classroom up until last year, I was just figured out how to make all works. As the Director said not only the direct service of dealing with kids and making sure that they are meeting their goals and doing what they need. But then the paperwork and parents and collaborating with outside, all of that was the hardest because inclusion in a classroom is integrated, you are dealing with so many other things other than just working with kids, touching based with their parents, and so many other people and so many other parts need to deal with. And I think for me that was the biggest challenge, getting all that done. (The Program Support Staff member-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

I think another piece to as the lead teacher if you do not have right assistant teacher, right help, and teachers help and support you have. I knew for me, when I first started here, I had a nice person as my assistant, but not someone that was able to support me in the classroom and for us support each other. What that left me feeling the end of everyday was I was actually taking away from some of my typical children because I had to rely on some of them to do their own thing, and not get as much as attention. When having Jess in the classroom, we were together that was great. (The Director-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)
In a classroom, a Lead Teacher and an assistant teacher work as a team. From my observations, assistant teachers needed to support lead teachers all day from morning to afternoon. During class time, it was always busy, which meant there needed to be agreements between lead teachers and assistant teachers ahead of time for each day.

During the individual interviews, each participant also mentioned what she suffered from while working.

I think the hardest thing for me when I was teaching here was juggling everything. Make sure I was in the meetings that IEP needs of the special education, make sure I was in the meeting for typical children, and then dealing with all of the other things that therapists, behavioral support staff and the volunteers, and just coordinating everybody, and make sure everybody is need from it. In the classroom, because you are serving both roles, you are the regular education teacher and you are the special education teacher, and then you have just all of these things to do on the top of that. (The Program Support Staff member-Individual Interview, August 2009)

There are a lot of struggles, a lot of challenges. I think that most centers, you have the Director and the associate Director. We are a small organization. It is a tough time financially. So, that is not the case here. The Program Support Staff member is dealing with IEPs and parents and staff support. She does a lot of supporting me when I need her. And at the time, I wish that we did have another person that could just do a lot of our manager stuff. (The Director-Individual Interview, August 2009)

The most difficult I would say was, when you have 3 to 5 year olds, you are dealing with a lot of behaviors whether they have disabilities or do not. In school, we were taught a lot of behavior management, but it tends to be focus toward the older elementary school, middle school population. So it was difficult to try to find some techniques really work that appropriate because I had not any early training that I had never in school learning the power of play. This is how we are going to teach these skills. I did a lots learning on my own by going to conferences stuff like that. I mean you go from, I went from teaching high school teaching to 3 year olds. It was really a transition. So, I really had to learn the power of play, help children learn through play just providing, how to provide and active environment for them. (The OT-Individual Interview, August 2009)
Each expressed different agonies about struggling with heavy burdens from work. As they defined their roles in the center for children with and without special needs, their workloads were weighted according to the rank of each. For example, the Director opined that she has to deal with many things because there is no assistant Director; and the Program Support Staff member also struggles with juggling everything because her job is supporting all the teachers. The OT mentioned that her difficulty is the age of the children, because she never had ECE training. In a similar vein, Lead Teacher A pointed out that it is difficult to figure out the levels of all the children in the classroom because she has a general education background, not SPLED. These last two participants’ difficulties reflect the need for teacher professional development.

All five themes were examined, and the important facts were generated from the participants’ experiences and stories; two fields of ECE and SPLED emerged in every theme. The most important findings among teachers in the inclusive program were ‘we are wearing both hats’ and ‘to balance the two worlds’. This requires investigating how the two fields are different and how the participants understand cross-fields education.
PRACTICE OF CROSS-FIELDS (ECE & SPLED) IN THE SETTING

“Think about the Venn diagram that here is your job definitely, and here is your job definitely, and here is the job we need to do together.”

(The Program Support Staff member, Individual Interview, August 2009)

“To find the balance between the two worlds”

(The Director, Individual Interview, August 2009)

As the data showed earlier, both ECE and SPLED coexisted in the setting. If each field remains separate from the other field, it is not a problematic issue. It means that if there are two different types of educator, and they do only things related to their own field, there would not be much complication. However, the participants indicated that they acted as both general and special educators in the classrooms no matter what their...
degrees were. This point requires us to examine ECE and SPLED closely. The following chapter will describe the fields as a part of teacher professional development, but we still need to investigate general information about the fields from the participants.

Three participants with the longest teaching experiences briefly mentioned their memories from when they were in college.

I do not think 20 years ago, there was a degree in early childhood special education, at least not in this area. When I graduated with the degree, it allowed me to work with birth through 21. I think we were even taking classes with people who were in early childhood or elementary education. I cannot remember exactly how that worked. But, yes we did get that. I think they are doing a lot more doing it now than I was doing it. We always have interns in here which is great. I remember we would have observations that we go and observed 2 hours. Well that is nice in the beginning, but these interns, they are here for 14 weeks. (The OT-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

I did not really hear about early education. It was not really degree option when I was in school. (The Director-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

I have been out of school almost 14 years. The early education was not, probably at least when I was in school, it was not a degree option. So, I did not know what I was missing, but that is what I thought I had my niche. (The Director-Individual Interview, August 2009)

My education, I have school started in the 70s, so .71 to 74, I went to college of Human Development. And at that time, that was a new thing. That was a new development, have this kind of college to work with, to promote human development, family study. So, it is kind of innovation in education. (The PT-Individual Interview, August 2009)

The OT recalled that when she was in college, there was no option for early childhood special education; if someone had a special education teaching degree, he/she was eligible to teach all levels from birth to 21 years old. This is a major issue from the general educators’ perspective on special education field, and it will be covered later in
this chapter. All three participants viewed the current education positively compared to their college years.

Among the participants, the OT and the lead teachers A and B commented most about the fields of ECE and SPLED. Their stories were on various issues related to the field of studies, such as what they learned in college, critics about the fields, making up the weak points, and more.

The OT noted her opinion of the two fields in an individual interview (August 2009).

So it was difficult to try to find some techniques really work that appropriate because I had not any early training that I had never in school learning the power of play. I did a lots learning on my own by going to conferences stuff like that. I went from teaching high school teaching to 3 year olds. So, I really had to learn the power of play, help children learn through play just providing, how to provide and active environment for them. I have mixed feelings because I think it is really hard to equally hit every stage of child development. I am talking child from up to 18, and give them equal time. If you did, getting your special ed. Degree would take 7 years. So, I think the way they are doing it, I see the necessary behind it. Would having the choice of some specialty help maybe, but when someone’s going to college, 18 or 19, really can they choose the specialty? That’s really a tough question. It would be nice be able to choose specialty, however, can 19 years old really choose specialty what they want to be doing 10 years on the load. So, is that realistic? I do not know. I think if schools have special education program, they should have some delineation between the early childhood, elementary, middle, and high school because they are so different. I think that regular educators have been learning more about special ed. in past several years because of the inclusion movement. Because they need to know a lot of things we know. So, I think that has been happening a little bit. I do not know why they can just be the degree of education (laughed) instead of special education and regular education because it is turning that direction anyway. If you are regular education teacher, you are going to have children in your classroom with special needs. I guess I just do not know if there needs to be distinct line between regular education and special education. I do not know if giving special education majors more course work in general education would necessary be that helpful. But I am bias toward special education teacher because they are already doing it. They are doing
it plus some, so I do not necessary think that there are general course that special educators are getting.

The OT pointed out an important matter. There was not enough time to take both general and special education classes. She also complained that it is very hard to touch every stage of child development and also very hard for younger students (18 or 19 years old) to decide which level they are going to choose. For ECE and SPLED, she complained about the difficulties faced if teachers need to be educated in both fields. It reflected how much the two fields are different and that teachers are insufficient in at least one field. This suggests that teachers need to collaborate because of their deficiency in the other field of study. Collaboration will be described in the next chapter.

Next, Lead Teacher A shared her opinion about ECE and SPLED in her individual interview (August, 2009).

It really depends on the person. I do not think there is one person that is kind of struggle more, really depends on your philosophy and how is your viewing, your reaction to the kids, how you are going to interact with kids. I think it is really depends on the person. I do not think one’s going to struggle worse than the other. The thing here is you need a special education degree to have those kids in a case load, so even though you are entirely in a general degree with the state with the IU. I have to be a special educator. Otherwise, I cannot have case load of IEPs. So, you really need it. I would think unless you done in IEP or you know how to behavior management, and really work with some aggressive kids or anything. I think it might be harder for the general educator if they are not used to that.

Yes, because for special education to be certified K-12. So, I would say just here you have co-courses or electives. I mean actually call them require course, but they would have to pick and choose based on what age level they are planning on teaching. So, is it K-5, 6-8, 9-12. I think the program should be that way rather than K-12, there is your degree, you can teach. Any ages from birth to 21 basically.

Based on her dialogue, the fields of ECE and SPLED need to be bridged for teachers of inclusive programs because of their multiple roles. She also mentioned, as did the OT,
that special educators are dealing with all levels of children from birth to 21 years old.

She recommended fragmented levels, such as K-5, 6-8, 9-12 and stressed that teachers
with general teaching degrees need to know about behavior management or IEP material
to teach children with special needs.

Lastly, Lead Teacher B described her observations about the fields in her
individual interview (August, 2009).

I think it is easier to go lean towards special education, just because a little
bit more about what you need to focus, whereas general education is more
open to everything. And even though I am the general, so I go across the
board, so I keep on switching rules. So, I do not think there is a really
level for, and educator, you are just educator.

It just seems what you needed to work on just because you find out all the
information about all the children with special education. And even there
is the milestone and stepping stone for all the general ed. Kids, it is just
easier to focus your attention those needs a little bit more special
education. So, it just seems easier.

My interpretation as special educator can work with almost all kids, not
just children with special education because you are actually focusing
more on like their goals, IEPs, help them to work with those, but also as
well you are multi tasking with children that a typical. And so, you are
finding out what they need as well. So, whereas I see general educators in
like different setting would be more of focus on the goals of general or
typical developing child. Whereas special needs or specialized instructor is
focusing on those plus individual goals for each child.

I mean depending on you work, like in here the general educator is more
focus on their group in the developmental, whereas special educator
focused on more therapies.

I think that would be great to see somebody have both degrees because
that means they are not just focusing on one thing. They are open to like
new experiences.

She stressed that teachers in inclusive programs are just educators, no matter what the
teachers’ backgrounds are. However, she admitted that it is good if teachers in inclusive
programs have dual degrees on ECE and SPLED. This suggested that teaching in
inclusive programs required both knowledge and skills for children with and without
special needs. According to Lead Teacher B, the teachers in the settings learn what they need, and what was not learned before was provided through their teaching experiences. This suggests that they learned what they need to know from in-service training, which is a part of professional development.

All the participants admitted the differences between two fields and that these differences require teacher professional development. They described the differences between ECE and SPLED through their teaching experiences in the inclusive program. Through the relationships among the teachers, the participants sensed the differences easily.

During the focus group interview (August 2009), the participants shared how they perceived the differences between ECE and SPLED in the setting.

I think it (general education) is more goal oriented and wants to have this child to succeed and in cooperate the goal for all the children. It is not just those specialized children, it is everybody. I think that's most, the biggest difference I've noticed. I know there is goal stuff like that in regular education program or non-inclusive program, but the goal goes across the board that it hits everybody in the center, not just that person. So, I think it is just more wanting for them to reach the goal across the board. (Lead Teacher B-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

For general education, the classroom has one objective or it is just a goal for the whole class, whereas in special education in the setting, you are differentiation. So, I have specific goals for each child on the top of the classroom goal that I want to them to, or objective that I want to them to meet each student. There are different methods that you are using for different children because it is not going to work for one student vs. another student. General classroom teachers are using one method in general, and trying to get whatever she tries to teach, just one way. (Lead Teacher A-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

The means to end. I think because special education teachers, you have to think about how you might need to use 10 different ways to get 10 different kids go to the bathroom or to cut on a line or whatever it is. Regular education, they know that children need to add and they are all
just going to learn to the just one method. My experience, as a parent, that is one of the hardest blocks for me because in my special education background, I kind of think 'Ok, if he is not learning to think this way, he can do it in this way, this way, this way, this way, this way. Whereas regular education teachers just have more vision of it can be done in this way. (The Program Support Staff member-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

I think in addition to that there is difference intensification, and I do not want to take away from regular education teachers, but there is so much paper work. There is so much documentation that comes along with children with special needs that 'Ok, you want to provide at typical setting, and you want to include children with special needs, and you want to everybody meet the goals, but you really get bugged down with the increased demands, but yet it is important for the child, and those demands are important. And so that is why you do extra miles to find 10 different ways to get 10 different children to go to restrooms. And we have seen teachers who have regular background in early education have to be good at too, and it is challenging. I think you have to step up to that additional challenge, and if you are not, I do not know your classroom will be successful. (Lead Teacher A-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

A point that three participants agreed on was that general education is more goal oriented than special education, reflecting the fact that general education is not as individualized as special education. However, the interesting point here is that all three participants sounded as though they represented special educators pointing at general education. Although Lead Teacher A pointed out that special educators have heavy workloads, she talked from the side of special education. Two of these three had general education backgrounds, but they all sounded like special educators.

During their individual interviews, each participant noted her viewpoint of the fields that they perceived through their teaching experiences in the setting:

I would say in a general setting, it was less structured, meaning that they were structured to the day, but it was not as structure as program where specialized education is. I know from working at other area, there was like in the morning, you have breakfast. Then it was free time. And then you had your circle time, then free time. Then you had your song time, and
then it was free time, and so on. Everybody had to do the same art project. And then it was free time rest of the day. It was not individualized. It was not the child come over in a small setting. It was a large group setting. Working here, you have structure. I see that more often in more specialized education programs. It is probably like one teacher per 3 kids at the max. So, it is more individualized to the child in needs. If they need extra help with cutting, I can help them to cut. And then, you are not running around to all the other children. So, it is more individualized by the number was like smaller groups but more focused. (Lead Teacher B-Individual Interview, August 2009)

The big difference is it is more individualized in the inclusive setting. I think general educators they forget to individualized, they forget to change their methods, and they forget to change their instructional styles so that each student is being reaches. But here, we see more of ‘this works for the student, this one not work for that student, I have to adapt this for this student and I have to change for that student’. So, we see this student as individual rather as whole class, rather as whole group. I think there is more support, but general educators are kind of on their own. Everybody needs to be a pro at behavioral management everyone needs to be a pro at data collection, everyone needs to know how to create IEPs like there’s no distinction between general and special because we are doing the role of both basically. (Lead Teacher A-Individual Interview, August 2009)

I do not think there is a boundary. I think there should not be. I think there should be a lot more overlaps. What is going on between two fields is just support down line. Think about the venn diagram that here is your jobs definitely, and here is your jobs definitely, and here is the jobs we need to do together (she was drawing the venn diagram with her finger in the air and pointed each section). That is how I think it should work. I think the biggest difference is, again the approach. I think that most teachers in the regular education kind of have one way to approach behaviors and one way to approach the classroom in general and curriculum, and all of that kind of very used to just that one child through the approach as I think. Special teachers are more able to think of all different approaches and all different ways to get the same results. I think special education teachers are vital to our field. We are going to classroom and more except to help these children, this child with physical disability, and this child with communication disability. All of them get to the same kind of end product, whereas regular education teachers just know I need to get my kids from here to here. They need to be able to draw a circle that this is the way we are going to do, so that is the biggest difference. (The Program Support Staff member-Individual Interview, August 2009)
How they approach their classrooms and how they structure are the big pieces I see. I just think how we approach, how we set up our day, how we manage the different part of the day. (The Director-Individual Interview, August 2009)

Know the children who, if you say ‘Do you want to come to the circle.’ They are going to tell you ‘No’. Do not ask. Depending on what the tasks you want to them is obviously their time throughout the day, you can ask the child, ‘Do you want that for snacking?’ They say ‘No’. That is fine. There are things they are expect to do that should not be stated the question. I do not want to say demand because that is a strong word, but they are request that you need to do. Some of other places I have been, I sometimes wonder if the general educational teacher even look at the child’s IEP. In a pre-school setting, sometimes I wonder the teacher has even look at the IEPs. I know a couple of teachers, general education teachers in the community, I doubt highly have not even looked at children’s IEPs. My first 6 years of teaching had a lot of that because I was special ed. Teacher, and there were two general education teachers. And we all had one big classroom. It was really hard to, and they were both Montessori trained. They wanted all of children to choose what they wanted to do, when they wanted to do it, have the freedom, and ok, for most kids, that is fine. But if I have a child who had disability and all he is doing is playing with the same thing all day because he is perseverating on it, and that is not an ok. I need to push this child a little bit, I need to redirect this child something that would be more educational for him vs. they will learn naturally learn through classes. That was a very big difference. I mean what is good for one kid is not always good for the next kid, and you really have to be individualized.
The paperwork is just ridiculous (Laughed). I mean the IEPs and IEP reviews, and ERs. I mean, right now, I am doing all that, but addition I have to do OT logs, service logs and data collection, and it is very extensive. (The OT-Individual Interview, August 2009)

There was also a dominant view in that all the participants pointed out what general ECE is missing, or how it is less qualified than SPLED. The question asked was “What is the boundary or difference between ECE and SPLED?”, but the participants perceived it as the differences between general and inclusive programs. As such, the participants understood that general settings represent ECE and inclusive settings represent SPLED.

They pointed out that general ECE settings are less structured, less individualized, give
less attention to different approaches, and create less of a burden on IEP preparation than that of inclusive settings.

The Director and the Program Support Staff member shared their experiences as administrators. The Director noted her preference when hiring teachers to strongly consider their academic backgrounds.

In her individual interview (August 2009), the Program Support Staff member said.

Upon my experiences working with my son's regular education teacher, again getting them to understand that there is more than one way to do things, and be open minded about doing things differently. I think that most teachers in the regular education kind of have one way to approach behaviors and one way to approach the classroom in general and curriculum, and all of that kind of very used to just that one child through the approach as I think. Regular education teachers just know I need to get my kids from here to here.

I think and I hate to keep referent my son, but this helps to me say an example. I was sitting in some meeting with my son where the regular education teacher would say 'I need him to be able to do this task', and she would say, 'everyone else is doing.' And she was just not able to think that he could color pictures in a different way or he could complete an activity in a different way, so he could still get the end product, but he might do it in a different way. She just was not at all be able to comprehend that there was another way to do it because she was so used to kids just do it. And I think regular education teachers do not sit down, I mean they do not learn different ways to get children to use different skills they want them. They should have the skills of working with all children knowing about child development and knowing about behavior and working with others because I think early childhood, particularly working with parents because you are helping parents to understand how to the little one's develop. I think flexibility is one other biggest thing you need to be able to do. When you are working in the early childhood, you just be flexible to new ideas and suggestions from others, be flexible to how to your day goes because preschoolers do not always go the way, things do not go the way you want to them to go with preschoolers.

She provided information not only as a participant but also as a mother of a child with special needs. Her son has a severe disability and he can barely move, but he was
participating in almost all events in his classroom during my observation. By the time of
the interview, the son was enrolled a kindergarten having more children without special
needs, and he came back to give a presentation about ‘kindergarten life’ with several
other graduates from the setting. At that time, although he could not speak or move, he
gave the presentation with his peers’ help. This was the point of the program. Her son
cannot do what other peers do, but he can do things in his own way with help. The
Program Support Staff member pointed out that teachers need to use adaptations and
flexibility when they teach in inclusive programs. She also added that SPLED teachers
need to improve their teaching and not just focus on the disabilities; instead, focus on
children with disabilities and collaboration with ECE teachers.

A Director’s role is very important and has a great deal of influence on the setting
and on other staff members, especially teachers. The interview questions for the Director
were different from those for the other participants in order to find out her viewpoint
about teachers and others. One question was, “What is your preference to hire teachers
considering their backgrounds?” The Director had a clear choice and the reason.
(The Director-Individual Interview, August 2009)

I think because they (teachers from SPLED backgrounds) already
understand that each child as an individual and what works for one, what
works for the other, whereas the individual with early backgrounds, like I
said we had one was a remarkable. She understood play, she understood
the importance of music and movement and cooperation. But that was
where stopped. She did not understand that certain children need certain
parameters. She did not know how to make those adaptations, and that was
harder. It is not what they are familiar with, and it is easy for special ed.
teachers in the early education. It is not because there's much more
resumed, and there is much more structured. There used to be different
density I think. So, teach them how to let go and understand of the
children should got more of the play, and I think 'can be more flexible'. It
is hard, but for my perspective, it is not as hard as teaching early ed. person how to do all of the other elements that come with special ed. child.

From her experience, she preferred hiring teachers with special education backgrounds because those with general education backgrounds hardly knew about specific disabilities and other matters needed for teaching children with special needs. However, she did not mention how much special educators qualified for general ECE knowledge and skills. This suggests that the site values teachers with special education backgrounds more than those with general ECE practice, which does not match with what she mentioned earlier about the need to balance the two practices equally.

The other thing that we rock a fine line on here is 'do we look like a special ed. setting?' or 'do we look like a typical pre- school that welcomes and does a nice job of in cooperating children with special needs?' And that is hard because I think someday we look like a special ed. setting, and someday and some years we look like a pre- school, but does really great job with special ed. children. So, it is helping to learn what the rest of the world is doing, and then bring it here and seeing how I can help our teachers to find the balance between the two worlds.

Since the Director has one degree and is completing the requirements for the other, and hence has insight into the theory of each, she explained both ECE and SPLED students’ reactions to inclusive programs as follows.

My classmates (ECE Students in her masters’ program) for the most part show some interests. Some of them have shown that is really nice you keep those kids, and that is it. There is not enough understanding from special or regular ed. because I met special education people on campus who say 'Oh, well, you cannot do it that way'. One way to the other, you can make it work if you try, but it is a challenge.

I am happy that I learned it, and now I have two different approaches that I see the benefit of. I think the bridging idea is a great place to start. I do not know I am prepare to answer how I think completely mash together the program will work. But I think if separate educators could get that early ed. piece they keep learn about play, the importance of it, and the education
that exist in play. And also the early education piece, they can learn the importance of some parameters and also the behavior piece. I think the behavior piece is the big thing that seems scary that most early educators. So, they can learn a little bit about that. Those seemed to be two little most critical to me. It is just understanding of each other’s world. That's a small start.

She was very confident of her ability to acquire and merge both approaches of ECE and SPLED. She pointed to one issue in each field that she thought was important and needed to be meshed together to result in better service in inclusive settings; ‘play’ from ECE, and ‘behavior management’ from SPLED. She also encouraged her teachers to understand different approaches.

I think that they (teachers in the setting) need to learn a bit about the philosophies in different approaches. I think knowing about that early development and that play piece are really critical. For the special needs piece, I think you have to help them understand that documentation is very important, not just for your sake for the child and parents, and then everybody in the team, you need documents for their progress more because the progress is going to follow really slower for child with special needs. I think the early ed. person is just really has the sense of the people work side of things. And also understanding that this child among the others in your classroom has individual goals, and how you going to overlay those individual goals your general classroom. How you going to balance that out, that is hard I think.

The Director pointed out the weakness of each field. First, a special education degree certified teaching a wide range of population, from birth to 21 years old. Next, ECE needs to more pay attention to exceptional children.

I think the weakness of each field, in each field, for instance, special ed., the biggest weakness I can felt was that they actually thought just because of its special ed., I can teach from birth to high school. I cannot do personality wise. So, I think they need compartmentalize a little more and be special early ed., special elementary ed., or special middle ed., or high school because I never ever even though my qualification say I could, I would never be so selfish as take out a job in high school special ed. classroom. And that concerns me because they're going to go out and 'well,
my degree says I can teach special ed. in high school, but I ever taught in the first grad. I am not saying that they can't learn, I'm just saying that maybe not the best practice because each age group is so different. I think with early education, I think they are doing a lot of things right, but they need to learn a bit more of that inclusive piece because especially with autism population, autism is exploring and the one thing that doctors were telling a lot of families with children with children with autism who are not so severe that they need getting do the typical environment. If the early education is not prepared for them, then they are not going to be successful. I want them to be successful as educators and practitioners.

Although the Director valued both ECE and SPLED practices, she represented the SPLED educators as frequently criticized by the ECE educators. When a SPLED educator asks an ECE educator to acquire more knowledge about exceptional children, the ECE educator also makes a rebuttal that SPLED needs to learn about typical development and practice. However, the Director spoke against the rebuttal.

I have heard from early ed. people that special ed. people have to know typical development, and they have to understand what typical development looks like. In order to know where they are taking child with special need, I think the biggest piece of it is they do not necessarily always know or remember what typical intervention looks like for development, typical interaction. I think that, for myself, I know where the child should be at 3 and 4 because I have to know in order to more that child with delay along. But I do not necessarily always know or think about not always cognitive of what a typical 3 and 4 could be able to do. What about the special ed. piece. I mean the special ed., they need to recognize what would be the typical classroom look like. And my staffs have been set up, I want to go and observe the typical environment to know.

It is putting in the course environment and my mind is thinking if we can take the special ed. people and give them a play developmental class. I think that would be critical. And for the early ed. people, we give them the introduction to exceptional children. That is the course I had to take as deaf ed. major because obviously deaf is just one element, but the introduction to exceptional children gave me some very superficial but some knowledge about each disability. And maybe window into why certain individuals, maybe with down syndrome or autism spectrum behave the way they do. It is going to at least give them introduction because I am sure that there is probably typical early education providers who never heard of certain disabilities that we deal with. That would be
really overwhelming absolutely. Those two pieces could help them because I don't like to see people in conflict, but I know they are. Now, we all think we got all the answers.

The Director repeatedly noted the importance of play for early childhood, but she also pointed out that sometimes play is different for children with special needs;

Play is the most challenging task for some children with disabilities. So, you understand play is natural, and people should be able to just play. Play is terrifying for some children. I mean children with autism spectrum, they have to socialize, and they have to be in physical practice with peers. That is terrifying. So, if we do not help them feel comfortable and maintain behaviors, they are not going to successful in play. So, that is how I look at it is. When you look at that play piece, it is huge. We should absolutely give them all the actions of play, but some of them are going to need parameters within their play, and they are going to need a big bunch of guidance to know how play be comfortable play. There are some of our children you can watch, and then they are so anxious. I mean we have our little guy who has no eyes, and sometimes he bites. But he bites not because he's mean, but he bites because people are in his face. So, it is too high to say go out children to play because it is not natural for all children. But it's important.

As the Director mentioned in the individual interview, a large number of points relate to the practice of ECE and SPLED in the setting. (1) the Director’s perspective on hiring teachers, and her mention that she prefers hiring teachers with SPLED backgrounds rather than teachers with ECE backgrounds; (2) the Director promoted facilitation of inclusive programs in early education, and she was proud of how the setting kept the balance between two fields; (3) the Director stressed the importance of and increasing attention to inclusion and the required need of teacher training and practice in the actual setting; (4) although inclusive education is getting more attention than ever, there is still not enough understanding of the other field; she especially pointed to the ECE field as needing further to go in facilitating inclusive program and added that it is hard to get ECE interns in the setting; (5) the need to bridge the two fields; (6) from both perspectives,
teachers needs to use different approaches, trying to understand each other’s goals and
methods; (7) the Director also mentioned the weakness of each field and the lack of
educational preparation for inclusive program; (8) to cover the weakness of each field,
she recommended cross-fields experiences or courses; and (9) the Director explained her
opinion on the different perspectives of ECE and SPLED toward play; she disagreed with
how ECE people define that play is natural for children because some children with
special needs are terrified by it or have different ways to play. Through this explanation,
the Director wanted to explain the different ways to approach each child. The important
notion is that every child can play, but play occurs in different speeds, different methods,
and different forms, so that teachers need to understand all those matters and lead
children to play in their own ways.

In summary, the ECE and SPLED practices in the setting illustrate several points.
First, the participants acknowledged there are differences between the two fields and that
each field needs to understand one another. Although they share in the practice of
teaching children, their intentions and approaches are different. By way of example, the
Director provided a good example of play. All children play, but children with special
needs sometimes struggle with play. Children with special needs can play but the process
may take longer than in those children without special needs, and teachers need a great
deal of adaptation and flexibility for each. Children are like a spectrum, so the base is the
same but so varies according to the characteristics of individual children. To accept the
differences in each other’s field is the key to the successful implementation of inclusive
programs where teachers must deal with the differences to provide appropriate service for
all children.
Next, the literal meaning of inclusion is sometimes misunderstood by people as a melting-pot that ECE and SPLED fields are mixed and blended together to produce an inclusive education. However, the participants in this study explained that there is a clear portion between ECE and SPLED fields, and that the two share common elements. The Program Support Staff member mentioned a Venn diagram in her individual interview. When she assimilated ECE and SPLED practice in it, the portion was equally same. However, after analyzing the data from all interviews, I noticed that there is more SPLED than ECE in the setting. The participants’ perceptions of the ECE field and its practice were a little critical; for example, they said ECE practice is less structured, less individualized, and less flexible than SPLED. Although the practice in the setting is not really heavy in one or another, the participants’ perceptions and understandings were based a little more on SPLED than on ECE. This can make a big difference in teaching practices in inclusive programs because of (1) the philosophy of the organization and (2) the ratio of children with special needs to children without special needs. The organization is more focused on children with special needs than typically developing children; it shows enthusiasm for giving better service for children with special needs. The ratio of children with special needs to those without also can influence the perception of ECE and SPLED fields. Public child centers with more typically developing children than children with special needs sometimes target inappropriate services for the latter group because of a greater focus on ECE than SPLED. Also, in the same context, the Director’s hiring decisions put emphasis on the SPLED field. She opined that teachers with ECE backgrounds need to learn more pieces of SPLED, but teachers with SPLED backgrounds need less effort when they get into the classrooms.
Chapter 6 reviews the professional development of teachers and their collaborations in the setting.
“That came with experiences rather than classroom educations”

(Lead Teacher A-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

“I think that would be a beneficial curriculum across the boards”

(The OT-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

“You need just see how to blend, but also see how they stand alone”

(The Director-Individual Interview, August 2009)

In this study, professional development of teachers in early education included two categories; college coursework and in-service training. As the participants noted that they played multiple roles in their classrooms no matter if they had general or special education backgrounds, it was necessary to review the participants’ teacher preparation programs, especially their coursework and practicum to investigate how much they were ready for working in inclusive program with children with and without special needs. This involved (1) reviewing coursework of their own (what helped or what was unnecessary teaching for inclusive programs); (2) reviewing recent curricula in ECE, SPLED, and ECSE to see how much has changed over time; (3) reviewing their cross-fields learning experiences; (4) suggesting necessary courses to help educators to teach in inclusive programs; and (5) recommendations for novice teachers who want to work in inclusive programs.
Additionally, in-service training was reviewed by the participants. Those emergent themes were presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Emergent Themes: Professional Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teacher preparation program</td>
<td>• Not much cross-fields learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Coursework &amp; Student teaching)</td>
<td>• Impact on the importance of student teaching, practicum, or internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In-service training</td>
<td>• There were various teacher conferences by different topics and different teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Outside teacher conferences &amp; In-setting learning through collaborating with other teachers)</td>
<td>• A great deal of in-service training achieved with teacher collaborations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Reviewing recent programs</td>
<td>• Learn almost everything from in-service trainings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Recommendations &amp; Suggestions</td>
<td>• Not much changes from the Participants’ programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Recommendations to create courses that help teachers working in inclusive programs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Suggestions for novices teachers who want to work in inclusive programs</td>
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Teacher Preparation Program

1. Coursework

Since all participants graduated between 5-30 years prior to this study, they could not vividly remember what they had learned. Depending on the participants, some remembered the exact the titles of courses, but some remembered only brief contents. None had the same academic backgrounds, so it was very interesting to review their pre-service trainings. [Note. the background sketches appeared in Chapter 4.] Also, it was clear how each participant had brought different philosophies, knowledge, and skills to the setting. The participants added reflections of their own programs.
Lead Teacher A, who has general education background and is enrolling a Masters program in SPLED.

To be prepared for special education for having students with special needs in my classroom, we really did not have any specific courses available at my college. I did take one class that was pacifically on deaf physical education. So there was one class that I took. And then the other classes on curriculum and instruction. It might be a chapter in a book or it might be...It was not overall focus on how to teach students with special needs. That came with experiences rather than classroom education. (In her Master’s Program, SPLED) They do have specific classes, course on behavior management and on specific learning disabilities, how to include them, and they are very big on collaboration and inclusion. They focused that a lot now, but they do not really say for what setting, but they are pushing everything now, pushing mainstreaming, pushing inclusion settings. (The Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

(Undergraduate Courses in General Education-Individual Interview, August 2009)

In undergraduate, I did Introduction to Education, Foundations of Education, Educational Psychology, Principle of Sociology, and then I did not think were unnecessary? Well, Youth Development and Culture, it was about adolescence and the present culture at that time which was 2000. Administration of PE and Athletics, I mean has Pea and Athletics, but Administration stuff, I was not just interested in. I guess if you plan in becoming administrator, that course would be helpful for you, but I did not really care for it.

In the course of Health and Physics again, I remember undergraduate I did educational psychology. That is we did all of the theories. They are doing Piaget, Vygotsky and Meslow, I mean everything we are still learning about today. Student teaching and Practicum, you learned a lot just on the job basically.

I had one class ‘Adaptive Health and Physics Education’. So, I did have one course on it. And then, within a few of teaching classes, as I said, there would probably be one chapter on special education or inclusion or back then resource room. But there was not a specific class for it. Educational theories, and there is a course on educational psychology that I did undergraduate.

(Grad Courses in SPLED-Individual Interview, August 2009)
For my classes now, Educational and Foundation of exceptionality which really talk about all different types of learners. Historical and Philosophical Foundation of education, that one had all the theories and stuff. That one was really a good class. I did not really think Educational Research and Assessment class I took from my grad school, I understand, but it is how to research and do that. I understand that everyone should do it, but all of other courses, teachers really make you do that anyway. I thought that class was just kind of redone all of classes we were doing elsewhere. And we did not need that because we have to take whole another class which I took on assessment and interventions. So, it was kind of unnecessary.

For my Master’s in special education, there are very specific courses on students with mental retardations, students with learning disabilities, teaching Mathematics for students with special needs, and they all push for inclusive settings as much as possible. Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment was big one and was very helpful. I think they are all helpful somewhere another even just the courses such as philosophy which was very pertinent what I am doing now and realizing what kind of tools can I use for each student. Instruction and classrooms, and a lot of behavior management which was very helpful.

In the specific course of Reading and Language Acquisition and teaching Mathematics, I did learn general education portion. And then, also just History of Education and Foundation of Education, those classes all talked about general education as well.

IEPs, I learned in grad school. I do not remember going over IEPs in undergraduate. They might be a paragraph or a chapter on adapted, how to adapt for students with special needs. Some sure that there is a chapter on it in a text book, but I do not remember in depth. I do not remember going in depth any IEPs just as a general educator. And I think that is something that all teachers need to know because, specially, with push mainstreaming inclusion. You are going to have a student, and every classroom’s going to have students with IEPs. You are going to have to know, but in the most settings, they still the special educators one that holds the IEPs and control over it, so general educator just has to give their present levels and show to the meeting basically. But their adaptation or modification in classroom, but they do not have to just write IEP. So maybe that is why they do not teach in college. I think everyone should know.

Lead Teacher A had very general educational theory in her undergraduate coursework and only one SPLED course (Deaf Physical Education). She is currently a Masters student in SPLED because she felt that she needed it after her experience working in the
setting. In her masters’ program, she is learning about many different types of disabilities, behavior management, and family involvement which she did not get from her undergraduate coursework. However, she did not have any ECE or general education in her SPLED program—there was no cross-fields learning. In spite of her dual major, she affirmed that she learned almost everything she knew about education from her experiences at the setting. It highlighted in-service training, which teachers get following college.

_Lead Teacher B, who had a general ECE background._

In school, we did learn about different diagnosis more than anything else. We learned about the developmental ages of children birth through high school. And we did a lot more with family involvement. There was more focus how do we get the child that does have diagnosis to place they can be take care of. So that is where I first introduced to like special education, but not necessary the education part of specialized education. (Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

Mostly my classes were revolved psychology and diagnosis and working with families. We did do early childhood which is kind of like the ages and stages of the children. Each course work that I took had some part of like helping the child, how to help families, reach out community and get the services they need that way. ‘Death and Dying’ was one of them. And it was how to help kids cope with death and families cope with that. And also another one was just early childhood, like sociology type thing, and ‘Marry and Family’, and how to take your kids. That was it. I have gone into trainings, like I have gone into autism conference a couple times. I went just the past week. But I have gone in there before I have gone into better K care courses offered through college. I have done, like different education programs through like training courses, not necessarily college courses. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

Although she was a representative teacher for a general education background in this study, she took more SPLED-related courses than general courses. Her undergraduate degree was in social work and, she took many courses involving diagnosing children with special needs.
With this, every participant had some piece of SPLED in this study, which supported the Director’s hiring preference. Lead Teacher B mentioned that she is getting trainings related to ECE courses after she got into the setting. Like Lead Teacher A, Lead Teacher B also learned mostly from in-service trainings which she did not get from her college education.

*The Occupational Therapist, who had a SPLED background in college and had occupation therapy training after it.*

We were been taught everyone kind of inclusion themselves having either their own special ed. classroom or a teacher in a resource room. There were not many opportunities back then for special education teachers going into the regular classroom. We went through reading classes, math classes, science classes, and then we went from there, and built our special education. Yes, we did get a chunk of that, regular education part, and I think we were even taking classes with people who were in early childhood or elementary education. I cannot remember exactly how that worked. But, yes we did get that. There were not many opportunities back then for special education teachers going into the regular classroom.

(Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

(Individual Interview, August 2009)

I do not know if I had enough child development work in college to really know what I need to know working with these children and fostering their love for learning. Really was no focus on early childhood education in my special education trainings. I was lucky to have two assistant teachers who been in pre-schools for years, years, year and years. I learned a lot from them.

A couple of college courses I remember that really beneficial were some of my technique courses. It was a professor who made it. It was all hand-on learning, not necessary with kids, but we were set up lessons and so forth for each other as though they were the kids. So, it was a lot of hand-on learning. We were always out to the community doing things. We were very rarely in the classroom. And I think that was a very beneficial course. I was never really into the educational theory. I know it is important, but it was hard to see how that plays into working.

In school, we were taught a lot of behavior management, but it tends to be focus toward the older elementary school, middle school population. So it was difficult to try to find some techniques really work that appropriate
because I had not any early training that I had never in school learning the power of play.
I think that one thing I never learned in college, I was just thankful good at it is conflict resolution, basic conflict resolution. I mean it is really important and I think that the conflict resolution gets the way of team’s developing a really good report to each other because if there always be disagreements, there are always different opinions.

It had been a long time since the OT graduated from college, so she could not recall exact course names. In SPLED, she recalled that she did not study ECE but learned from assistant teachers who worked with her in a pre-school setting. This illustrated a common link with the lead teachers, who also learned from being part of the workforce and from other teachers. The OT asserted the importance of hands-on experiences, which the lead teachers also stressed. According the OT, it was very impressive that her program focused behavior management but she had never learned the power of play in her teacher preparation program. This implied that she knew the power of play now, and had learned from other teachers. Another piece of her SPLED education that the OT criticized was a lack of focus on early childhood populations; she mentioned earlier that she struggled when she started to work for children because of this gap.

*The Physical Therapist, who had her degree on Human Development and Family Study (HDFS) and had physical therapy training after that to become a physical therapist.* The PT came out from college in the 1970s and she hardly recalled that time. She more had suggestions for higher education and novice teachers rather than comments about her college courses, but she mentioned her teacher preparation program in her individual interview (August 2009);

Like I said one I did early childhood education, I probably had 12 or 15 credits in working with exceptional children.
There was a lot of just basic requirement, and then core courses. There
was one for exceptional child. So it’s a little different because the
curriculum for pre-school is kind of general knowledge, right? But the
curriculum for, let say secondary education, high school to be able to teach,
I mean some of children if even you are in special ed., you are maybe
working in their curriculum. Out of the regular curriculum, and some of
the information, I think you might need some more methods courses or
information about teaching some of the core content, right? They should
really be something you know that deals more different ages.

As noted earlier, there were no ECE backgrounds among the participants, but the PT was
the closest to having one. In HDFS, she focused on early childhood education, and she
also took many SPLED-related courses. She knew when she was in college that was the
way when she changed her major from sociology to HDFS. Her program was not cross-
fields learning either.

The Program Support Staff, who had SPLED background but no further academic
degrees. She was a Lead Teacher a year ago but became a Program Support Staff
member to help other teachers in the setting.

For the my special education field that certainly we touched not as well, I
did not have anything that was other than one class that I took on 'infants
and toddlers with special needs', just an elective class. And anything
specifically related to early childhood education. Basically, we learned all
of the ages. Because I was dual majors when I get student teaching, I did
two placements, but they were both able to be the elementary level. (Focus
Group Interview, August 2009)

I actually thought that I was really prepared. I was out in the field, doing
stuff from my freshman year through my final year there, I was in school
14 years or 15, 14, 15, 16years ago. So, definitely a lot has been changed,
but I thought back then. And I got a really bases of curriculum. Regular
education classes were really prepared for curriculum development and
lesson plan. I think I was really well prepared when I left the school. And
my special education classes focused on a lot of particular disabilities, IEP
writing, and testing. My first job was actually working here, and I felt like,
they experienced in the classroom or something I had to learn, but I felt
like I had, got the nice bases to start with it at least. There are certain
things were not covered as well that we did not spend a lot of time on how
to deal with parents and parents interactions, and we did not spend whole of time on co-teaching and collaborating with other educators, and I think those things, but now education includes parents always would be one thing, but I felt like the basics I got is strong bases. I liked in my regular education, I liked some of my curriculum classes the best. And in special education, I actually liked my class on evaluation the best. I loved to give assessment or evaluate children, and I feel like, it was like that classes gave me really strong inside on understanding children and how they work, and just how to understand some of their needs. So, I think that was one of the best classes that I took. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

She had a dual major, elementary education and SPLED. She was actually from both general and special backgrounds, which the participants considered the ideal for teaching in an inclusive program, but she had no ECE background. She pointed out what were good in general and in SPLED fields that she learned curriculum aspect from general program and IEPs and assessment from SPLED program. Although her college program was well prepared, she pointed that she never learned in college but necessary to teach in inclusive programs, parent interaction and collaboration pieces. She was so confident that she had learned both approaches in general and SPLED fields. This may explain how she played her role helping teachers with general or SPLED backgrounds and children with and without special needs. This suggests that teachers with both knowledge and skills may increase other teachers’ confidence and open flexibilities teaching in inclusive programs.

The Director, who had a SPLED background in her undergraduate program and was enrolled in an ECE masters program.

I had, we called method courses. So I took methods of science, social studies, language & art, and meth. And I learned some grammars and general components how to teach certain elements in the elementary program. On the special ed., deaf education, I was told that these are deaf children, and here is how you work with them regardless of subject matters. There I would not say I am learning about the curriculum alone, I
am learning about the research, methodology, family involvement, play, the importance of play. I am learning a lot about history, but so far we have not talk about curriculum. (Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

Through my schooling, I think I learned a lot of the foundation of all skills. I learned how to do assessments. I learned the basics of certain curriculum methods, language, art, and math (from undergraduate). I learned importance, now in graduate school, of play, and early education, and how to help parents' understands of the play piece (from grad program). I think what I did not necessary learned are how to be a teacher leader, and that transition or how to interact parents because those things are you can really learn unless you are doing them. So, until you have a chance to lead a parents meeting which is overwhelming at first, and even now I feel a new teacher again. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

The Director also felt experienced in both fields although she had not completed her masters in ECE. She was mostly positive about the courses she took, but she criticized some course content after practicing in real settings. She added that it is also very important to provide courses in proper sequence; for instance, she studied Administration and Organization in the first semester of her undergraduate program, but she needed the course now. Like others, the Director also evaluated her college education programs positively, in that she had both SPLED and ECE pieces.

In summary, there were several points the participants made. (1) there were few cross-fields learning between general and special educations; (2) the participants with both general and special backgrounds had more confidence in their work and more positive evaluations in their teacher preparation programs than the participants who had either general or special education (3) the participants valued hands-on experiences more than anything else for teaching in inclusive programs; moreover, when the participants mentioned their college programs, they all suggested that both programs needed more courses with practical contents; (4) a majority of the participants agreed that they learned
almost everything needed to teach in inclusive programs from in-service trainings, not from their teacher preparation programs; and (5) all participants set a high value on student teaching (although each participant called it something different, such as practicum, internship, and student teaching.)

2. Student teaching

During the interviews, one of the most frequently discussed issues was student teaching. The participants described their experiences of student teaching and the importance of student teaching experiences. The student teaching experiences were different depending on the programs in which each participant was involved.

For student teaching, I had two full time students teaching. One was with 3rd grade and one was high school. You could not do both in elementary or both in high schools. So, they wanted to make sure you had a little variety in terms of age. I remember we would have observations that we go and observed 2 hours. (The OT-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

One of SPLED’s weak points discussed among the participants was its broad age range (birth through 21), but the OT pointed out that the field of SPLED tried to redeem this disadvantage during student teaching by sending students to different levels of school. However, she criticized this system in her individual interview session, saying that giving a choice to college students at age of 18 or 19 was not always realistic. She concluded that SPLED needs a delineation between early childhood SPLED, elementary SPLED, and middle and high SPLED. She noted.

I have mixed feelings because I think it is really hard to equally hit every stage of child development. I am talking child from up to 18, and give them equal time. If you did, getting your special ed. Degree would take 7 years. So, I think the way they are doing it, I see the necessary behind it. Would having the choice of some specialty help maybe, but when
someone’s going to college, 18 or 19, really can they choose the specialty? Do they know? That is really a tough question. It would be nice be able to choose specialty, however, can 19 years old really choose specialty what they want to be doing 10 years on the load. So, is that realistic? I think if schools have special education program, they should have some delineation between the early childhood, elementary, middle, and high school because they are so different. (The OT-Individual Interview, August 2009)

The Director and the Program Support Staff member had a common link in that they both had general and special education backgrounds, and during their student teaching, they both had experiences in general and special education settings, which helped them to approach both fields closely.

You qualified now to teach from birth through age 21 which I never thought I could do. The thing landing me in early education was an internship. I also had two placements, one on regular ed. and one on special ed. setting. I did my regular ed. in 3rd grade, and I did not like it. I did not really care for at all. I did not enjoy regular setting (laugh) and did not enjoy 3rd grade very much. Then my special ed. setting placement was in a kindergarten all deaf children and then I loved it. (The Director- Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

Because I was dual majors when I get student teaching, I did two placements, but they were both able to be the elementary level. How I got the school I wanted to be a high school teacher, I have no Idea. (The Program Support Staff member- Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

The Director noted that she could comprehend ECE because of her internship. It was interesting that she and the OT talked about the same SPLED issue, teaching from birth to age 21. However, only the OT realized the need for dividing age groups after her student teaching experience.

During the individual interviews, two participants (the lead teachers) added explanations of practicum, student teaching, or internship.

We started our freshman year, and it was very limited our freshman year. By junior year, we are doing a few hours a week until our student teaching
which was of course 15 weeks straight. We did our practicum every year. At this point, my classes, I was only required 10 hours each class until student teaching. (Lead Teacher A-Individual Interview, August 2009)

My internship was family intervention crisis services (FIX), and I think that was like the most like meaningful thing for me because actually got me involved with families, got me out to the communities. And even you are helping young child learn how to cut because that was a part of FIX was helping the parents to figure out what they need to do to get their children to go to the next step, so that is one of the reasons why I got involved this school as well. (Lead Teacher B-Individual Interview, August 2009)

Lead Teacher A sounded as though she did not have enough practicum because she used the words “limited”, “a few”, and “only” when she explained her student teaching in college. Other participants recalled that they needed more hours in student teaching as well. Lead Teacher B was in social work when she was in college. Her student teaching focused a lot on families and interventions, which her program was focused on. It made her anticipate that students practice and learn differently by settings. As the Director and the Program Support Staff member did their student teaching in both general and special settings, they could practice and learn more than if they just had experience in one type of setting.

The Director provided information about internships. When I interviewed them, there were three student teachers in the setting, which had a well-structured internship program designed to help student teachers learn, practice, and improve in the setting.

We have three student teachers right now. Two long term sub, and then we also have a summer camp counselor for school age group. When they come in, we really evolve with our internships. We have come a long way, so now in order to find out what they know, what can bring to us, and also what we can give to them. We give them a pre-survey, so we can find out how do they learn best, what they feel they are getting from their classes they can bring our environment, what are they hope to gain, what would be a horrible to them to experience. We try to really drive
what they want to learn. We also have 2 weeks training periods. So, we take them through all of things we considered to be critical for them to know before they can be fully successful in classrooms. We train them on IEPs. We train them on even our food program, train on them dietary restrictions that a put in place by the state. They have whole two weeks, and I do not do all the training. The different staff do the really sure that team piece. So, different staff trains them on different pieces of what we feel they need to know. We tried to give them plenty time to observe before hopping in, but we explain to them right out of the gate before they even start. They will be considered a staff member. So, we are going to give them a lot of skills, they are coming with a lot of skills. We expect them to ask questions and keep learning, but we are not going to depend on them and have whole of the same expectations. And then we meet with them throughout their internships, and the end of their internships, their last week, which is the next week, we give them another survey to follow up to see their, 'Ok, well how they work for you? How do we do? What can we do differently?' It is great because they are young, but this is their first real life experience. So, we tried to give them the most that their real life experience that they can get. We want them to dive in and learn. (The Director-Individual Interview, August 2009)

I would love if someday, we can have early education interns. I think that would be remarkable. I do think that they have had a lot of preparation, but I also think a big piece of it comes down to personality because we had interns. We had a lot last semester, and many of them from the same department. They have all taken the same classes, and yet three of them lows the equation. One of them had a bad attitude. Every day she looked and said they waste her time. So, her personality played a lot into it. She, I don't think was mature enough to be out for this to see what she had to stand the game. We tried always held interns 'If your attitudes like you're willing to learn, we are going to let you go to the meetings, we are going to let you observe therapies, we are going to let you do anything we would do to get the full experiences'. But if your attitudes are poor, and you do not drive from this, that is on you. I still think though, sending students out sooner is really something that needs to happen. Get them out the field sooner. (The Director-Individual Interview, August 2009)

The setting was not just accepting interns, but also gave them opportunities to learn. A copy of what the Director mentioned as a ‘survey’ for interns appears in Appendix F. The center surveyed the interns at the end of their internship, not only for the interns but also the teachers in the setting. The survey questions were.
1. The orientation I received was clear and helped me feel prepared for what to expect throughout my internship.
2. My internship experience matched my expectations as outlined in the roles and responsibilities document I received upon selecting this placement.
3. How did your internship experience tie in with your course work?
4. What would you have like to done/experienced more of during your internship?
5. What would you have liked to have done/experienced less of during your internship?
6. What did you like best or felt had the most value to you?
7. What did you like least or felt had the least value to you?
8. Would you recommend our program to other interns?
9. Comments and suggestions

In a staff meeting, the Director handed out the survey results and talked about how the staff could improve its work with the interns they will get in the future.

**In-service Training**

In-service training categorizes into two; (1) teachers acquire knowledge and skills from outside the site through workshops or conferences; and (2) teachers develop their knowledge and skills on the site through teacher collaborations. Both provide new and necessary knowledge and skills for teachers to serve children with and without special needs appropriately. In-service training is an important resource for several reasons. First, it can be an alternative training, if a teacher did not receive appropriate training for teaching in inclusive programs. Next, the path of educational issues changes so quickly so that teachers need to continually keep up their professional developments. Last, teachers acquire self-improvement and confidence through in-service trainings.

When the participants were asked to discuss their teacher preparation programs, they indicated that they learned mostly after they began the work. This indicated the importance of in-service trainings. During summer breaks, teachers often attend different
training programs and conferences. The Director explained that she did not send all
teachers for the same trainings or conferences; because of time and money conflicts, they
were sent to different sessions, and they shared with each other what they learned from
each conference. There is a huge overlap between in-service training and collaboration
evident in this process.

I tried to take a lot of continuing education courses, just kind of keeping
up speed. And there was nothing being in a center does it, there was
nothing like that. (The OT-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

The OT pointed out the very important role of in-service training, noting that she is
keeping up with the speed of recent education trends. The Program Support Staff member
mentioned how regulations frequently change and are hard to follow on time. This script
of the OT suggested an alternative way of what the Program Support Staff member
mentioned. Teachers can develop their professional careers through in-service training

No, I have gone into trainings, like autism conference a couple times. I
went just the past week. I have done, like different education programs
through like training courses, not necessarily college courses. It was more
trainings I have gone through because they involve more, more pointers
than I have learned in the classrooms, whereas in the classroom, it was
more about theories and like that kind of stuff. (Lead Teacher B-Individual
Interview, August 2009)

Lead Teacher B was directly quoted that she learned what she needed to teach in
inclusive programs from in-service trainings rather than teacher preparation program
courses. Not only Lead Teacher B but also other participants mentioned how much they
rely on in-service training for teaching in inclusive programs. Because each participant
came with different backgrounds and the inclusive setting required the participants to be
both roles of ECE and SPLED teachers, the participants were often faced with hard walls
that they did not know or could not handle. In this case, the participants learned from in-
service trainings what they did not learn from their teacher preparation programs but they really needed to know. It was not the focus to get information about what does each in-service training provided for teachers for this study, so the interview questions did not include the details of in-service training content.

When the participants considered in-service training, it was not limited to outside training but also included on-site training. Each participant listed various ways of how they developed their professional careers in the setting. The participants all agreed that they learned something every day by collaborating with other teachers in the setting, especially when working with someone who came with different background. There were diverse ways to learn and teach each other, such as a mentor system, peer coaching, meetings, and small chats. These ways overlapped with collaboration, which will be described later in this chapter.

**Reviewing recent teacher preparation programs**

Recent teacher programs were reviewed to examine how much teacher programs had changed over time. It was also worth considering how the participants evaluated the programs, because they realized better what they needed to teach in inclusive programs after having had several years of experience. Three programs (ECE, SPLED, and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)) from different colleges were provided in each individual interview to each participant. There was no intention to evaluate or assess the programs, but rather to review them to understand their differences from the programs the participants themselves went through. All three presented programs were well known in
Each participant took 5-10 minutes to look at the programs and state their impressions freely. There was no pressure if they chose not to comment about the programs. The Program Support Staff member just stated “The programs looks good” but provided no further details. The other five gave their opinions.

Lead Teacher A (Individual Interview, August 2009)

(SPLED) For special education, it is a typical undergraduate. You have all your general requirements. I like all the field experiences and methods courses that they included. I like the vocational aspects of disability. For ECE, I thought the elective are nice, ‘Child and Nutrition’ and also ‘Children’s Literature’. I think that is nice selective for teachers of special education for the early childhood. I mean they have got courses fun to play activities and materials which is excellent because people do not really view that is really needed, but you have to have that. And once again, ‘Child and Nutrition’ is nice to have here, and the others are pretty standard what you would expect out of the program. Graduate courses (ECSE), ‘Family Support’, and family support and guidance. For inclusion, this undergraduate in special education did a lot of general requirements which every undergraduate program is required. Hopefully all make you confident as a teacher.

It looks like they have no classes, except one, ‘Understanding Exceptional Children and Youth’. And that is an elective, so they do not even have to take it. And also ‘Techniques/Procedures for Corrective and Remedial Reading’, but it’s once again, a course you do not have to take. It is an elective. Once again, it would probably benefit all educators to, not only have methods and practicum classes not just in a regular setting but also in a special education setting.

(SPLED) It looks like definitely more towards in special education. They do not have any of development stages. There is no internship that you are teaching in general education setting. They have an internship, and then they have to do practicum. Have to your time in general education setting as a being the collaborative special educator to help regular educator, and then also the half for special educator. I would think that will be very helpful for everybody.

Lead Teacher B (Individual Interview, August 2009)
I think the field experience is probably the best thing. And also Methods & Teaching and Behavior Management & Classrooms are really good, like more observations or volunteer requirement and classroom with children with special needs would really helpful. ‘Developmental Individual Education Programs’ is a really good thing because you need to know that in order to teach.

And they have play activities and materials what they need. But I just said more hands on experiences for this one for early childhood education and multiple areas of study, not just one area.

‘Developmental Language and Literacy’ is great. But I still think they need, I see the ‘Behavioral Management’, which I think great. Is it just taught like ‘this is what a child with PDD might experience’ ‘this is a child with Down syndrome’. So it might be just behaviors of different diagnosis, or is it behaviors that come out of the child and how to deal with them. And I think they need to know how to support family and the guidance in the, even though I see, like the legal issues. And ‘Public Policy’ that would be more assessment talking about the other one. I consider special education courses because a lot of, almost everything in it about disabilities.

But the ‘Health and Physical Education’ that should almost be requirement not an elective, so that you can provide different activities for children in the classroom as well. ‘Human Development’ is very important thing. And I took ‘Children and Youth in Urban Schools. Probably public welfare is a good thing to learn because you need to know what you can have in your room or you cannot have. The ‘Child’s Health and Nutrition’ usually the teachers have no say over what they are eating because it is usually already outlined by the school. And also the important on ‘Children’s Literature’ is a good thing. It’s not necessarily like always setting at the table like teaching. Like have them do more peer -related activities. That could even be an elective, like ‘Peer Interactions’ be a helpful peer interaction or guide something like that.

The OT (Individual Interview, August 2009)

The early childhood, it looks very basic to me. What I like one of these here for special education ‘children and youth in urban schools’, but not in early childhood. Like why would that be a special ed. Course? I really like, I like one the early childhood special education, some of the courses that really do, could be on either of these and it would beneficial for regular education teachers. ‘Development of learning of language and literacy’, I mean that is probably more appropriate than ‘Methods of materials for teaching language’. It looks like if I took this course, I would not know how to deal with a child who had any disability at all.

I do not know if giving special education majors more course work in general education would necessary be that helpful. I do not necessary
I think that there are general courses that special educators are getting. (The early childhood special education program).

I really love the thought of early childhood special education degree. I mean our early childhood special education degrees, ‘Do they take longer to complete than the early childhood or special education?’ I think it looks like leans a little bit on special education side. I mean it might look a little bit heavy on special education side, but that might be necessary because that is more specialized.

(The PT-Individual Interview, August 2009)

(ECE) There is really nothing here for children with disabilities. I mean here’s one ‘Techniques/Procedures for Corrective and Remedial Reading’, ‘Literacy’ is a big emphasis in these days. There is ‘Introduction to Education for Exceptional Children’.

The Director (Individual Interview, August 2009)

I think that these are all look similar to the elements of what I took. And some I wish I would have vocational aspects of disabilities, and play activities. I also did not have health, physical education and safety. I had legal issues and assessment. I like Human development behavior. I like this one has a lot of practicum.

It (ECSE) seems a little more special ed. heavy is my first incarnation. It still seems like focusing more on special ed. Piece. They have in the early education, but in special ed., they have health and physical education in elective but not in requirement, which is really interesting. It is so important. How do you learn that there is certain disease? I mean maybe you did not know that you could get lice or skeevies or those funny diseases that children pass around. So, I think that is a big piece.

Each participant had different thoughts on the programs. They named different courses and shared opinions. In collective summary, the reviews of recent ECE, SPLED, and ECSE programs had several points; most interesting of all, the programs were not much changed from what the participants took in college.
1. The participants pointed out courses that grasped their attention, some recommended by a single participant and some by multiple participants. These included Children and Youth in Urban School, Vocational Aspect of Disabilities, Child and Nutrition, Children’s Literature, Methods and Teaching, Play Activities and Materials, Family Support, Children and Youth, Techniques/Procedures for Corrective & Remedial Reading, Behavior Management and Classrooms, Developmental Individual Education Program, Developmental Language and Literacy, Legal Issues & Public Policy, and Health, Physical Education & Safety. From among 96 courses in the three programs, the participants picked these as the most interesting or necessary for teachers in inclusive programs. In particular, the participants emphasized the course of Behavior Management and Classrooms in SPLED, and Play Activities and Materials in ECE programs. The course Vocational Aspect of Disabilities was new, and the participants showed their interest and stressed its necessity. All participants agreed that courses on the literature of young children are gaining more attention.

2. There were not many courses for cross-fields learning that the participants pointed out—only one SPLED course in an ECE program; that course was not even a requirement, but an elective. The participants did not understand why the titles of some courses limited content to children with disabilities, and not just children. However, they did not mention the SPLED program of cross-field learning. In addition, the OT stated it was not necessary for SPLED educators to take additional general courses because they were already doing it.

3. Many elective courses in the programs needed to be converted to requirements, such as Understanding Exceptional Children and Youth in ECE programs.
4. The participants pointed that the ECSE program inclined toward SPLED and was offered as a master’s program, not an undergraduate program. In ECSE, people expected the combination of both fields from ECSE, but the program was SPLED for young children. Courses were all focused on children with special needs, but if not, the participants considered the program an ideal for teaching children with and without special needs.

5. The participants stressed the field experiences and hands-on practices as expected. The participants added that experiences needed to be in multiple areas to learn the foundations of all working places.

6. The participants, especially those who had SPLED backgrounds, critically observed that the ECE program provided only basic elements. The OT pointed out that if she took the ECE program, she would not know how to deal with a child with special needs due to the absence of SPLED courses in the program.

Recommendations and Suggestions

As the last part of Professional Development, the participants made comments about teacher preparation programs and suggestions for novice teachers during the process of interviews. Each participant came from a different background and working experience, but all worked together under the same philosophy of education and saw the same direction for the children they were teaching. All participants experienced a great deal of trial and error in teaching children with and without special needs, so it is worthwhile to hear their voices.

Suggestions for effective coursework (Focus Group Interview, August 2009)
I think it is great if a class on co-teaching is available, and also how to do mixed ability groups. (Lead Teacher A)

Hand on experiences, collaboration between all the different people. I am routinely shocked that they do not send practicum teachers out until what their last year. I mean they may not been doing it correctly same as when I was in school, but we went out into the classroom in our first semester in education. We have not given them skills or let them see the success that if we were collaborate well. (The Director)

I think more hands on. You don't really get to learn technique unless you seeing them use consistently. Need longer and more practicum. I think that having a course on co-teaching would be beneficial for all educators. I think that would be a beneficial curriculum across the boards. (The OT)

I think collaboration is good one because not only my experience, I have a child with special needs, and here I think we do a good job on collaborating as much as we can. (The Program Support Staff member)

If the teachers actually get to observe therapists, they get an idea of what therapist is and what they stand for instead of just meeting them at the first day of school, and say this is a child and this is therapist. Actually observe more and more the therapy time with children, I think that is very beneficial. (Lead Teacher B)

In the focus group interview, each participant made various suggestions but narrowed them down to two main things for emphasis (1) more hand-on courses, and (2) creating co-teaching or collaboration courses.

Comments for novice teacher (Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

I think if you are a brand new teacher, you need to admit that you really do not know as much as you think you do. And do not be afraid to get warn from people around you, and do not be afraid of asking questions, and I mean surround yourself with good teachers and ask questions and learn from them. (The OT)

Do not be afraid to challenge the child that the child can be late you might work to get there, but they are able to do it. (Lead Teacher B)

Do not afraid to say 'I do not know'. Do not give up, it is worth it. And do not be afraid to fail. (The Director)
I think that is advice for new teachers to know that you have to be flexible and you have to know the things consistently. (The Program Support Staff member)

In any settings, you are going to have people who have different backgrounds, just like here, and you are going to have people with different knowledge and different approaches. Take as much as information as you can because it is going to serve you in the future. (Lead Teacher A)

In their comments for novice teachers, the participants used more “Do not…” or ‘Be…’ types of statements, which valued the attitude of teachers, not specific skills or knowledge. These statements reflected the entrance level of teaching in inclusive programs; if one is ready to accept and has flexibility to adapt everything at the beginning of his/her teaching, the person can be a teacher in inclusive program although he/she does not have the professional skills. The attitudes come before the skills of teachers.

In the individual interviews, each participant added more suggestions and comments. The contents were not much different from those in the focus group interview but were stated in greater detail. Given the length of each participant’s script, it was obviously noticeable how much they had been through teaching in the inclusive program, and their eagerness to help novice teachers reduce difficulties they will face in inclusive programs.

The Program Support Staff member (Individual Interview, August 2009)

I think it would be helpful to have more practical classes. It would be really helpful to have classes that more on practical applications how you to adapt curriculum, how are some physical adaptations, just more practical sorts of thing for them take more information for the laws, more information for on just general disabilities.
I will definitely suggest more for teachers on that collaborative piece. I really think along with that collaborative piece, not just teachers collaborating but parents' collaborating, and also agencies'. I know when I was doing my coursework, I had to go out and to observe different disabilities, and I had to observe different age groups. But I never had to observe staff meetings. I never had to observe parents' conferences or IEP meetings. And I think a lot of people learn through experiencing, so I do not think it is helpful to just send pre-teachers out and say 'go observe the classroom', as it is to say 'go observe lunch time in a classroom' 'go observe nap time in a classroom' 'go observe a meeting' 'go observe a parent's night', that's sort of thing that I think pre-teachers need to get experiences as well.

I think my biggest expectation when working with someone who has regular education background is to have open minded and flexible. I think those are the biggest things that they listen to my suggestions, and they will not just close down the gap. Here, that there are the other ways to do things that meet the needs, especially those disabilities. I think I have worked with some people who it is their personalities to just think. And also I think for some people, it is just been their experiences because they are been working in regular education for so long. I think that it is mixed personality and experiences and a lot of different things.

The Director (Individual Interview, August 2009)

You cannot be a real strong personality that believes your way is the only way to do things. Then you are not going to be successfully collaborative with others. I think you have to be a good communicator too. I think you have to be willing to say your person in a kind way, 'I can't agree with this' or 'What if we try this way'.

I think a big piece of it comes down to personality. I still think though, sending students out sooner is really something that needs to happen. Get them out the field sooner. Why I say it if you send students out sooner because they probably understand better whether they are even on the right track. Because I do not think there be anything worse than getting through 2 or 4 years of school and doing internship and going 'Oh, my gosh, this is not what I want to do'. And I think when I went to school in undergraduate because they put us out in observations setting in classrooms the very first semester of college. So, plenty of people that I started college with them still knew (wanted) education anymore because they went out there like, 'This is not for me'. So, I think we do maintain a lot of individuality, but we have to have similar drive to succeed with these children.

The OT (Individual Interview, August 2009)
I have a lot of assistant who if there on a 15 minutes break, then they come over and say ‘Do you mind if I come to OT’, and just watch what you’re doing with them. That is really open door policy. I think that it’s almost takes a novice to be proactive in their own learning. I think it takes a lot a novice to be proactive in their own learning.

A lot of novice or assistant teachers do is if you want the child to go to bathroom, you do not say, ‘Do you want to go to the bathroom? You say ‘It’s time to go to bathroom’ because if you say ‘Do you want to go to the bathroom?’ and he says ‘No’ Well that’s a just simple one that I think almost anyone who’s working with children for the first time.

I think we all have open communication that if we see somebody doing something, some small like that we can speak up and say this might be a better way to try that.

If we can collaborate, we can provide the best educational environment and setting for the kids. And the only way we can do that is by working with each other. It is beneficial to children.

I think that one thing I never learned in college, I was just thankful good at it is conflict resolution, basic conflict resolution. And actually setting a conflict that people have deal with, I mean it is really important and I think that the conflict resolution gets the way of team’s developing a really good reports to each other because if there always be disagreements, there always be different opinions.

If you’re regular education teacher, you are going to have children in your classroom with special needs.

Lead Teacher A

Well, say that you might want to just have some classes adaptive something, like how to adapt these courses to students with special needs. They should probably have some field experience or methods, and in general education classroom that has students with IEPs there as well. They need to know how to reach the general population as well if you really want to push inclusion. I mean why just need how to assessment of exceptional children, why not just assessment of children. And then, maybe a course on collaboration how to in collaboration is something that every educator needs because even if you are not just collaborating with in a special education population. I mean anyone, so maybe a course on collaboration and communication would be very helpful for all.

Lead Teacher B (Individual Interview B, August 2009)

I think they need more ‘Behavior Management in the Classroom’. I think that is like the number one thing because there might be a child screams all day. I think more observations than anything else, not even observation
but hands on field work. I think it is the most important thing because you can only get so much in a classroom and then to apply, and actual hand on experience is more important.

I would say behaviors and transitions for the children because you still transition children from one activity to another.

Curriculum, let say we just make generalized curriculum for like college course, but more hands on, definitely more hands on with that.

I think it would be great to take these courses just because I think just having more experience both fields. They are learning their hands on experiences on how to handle the behaviors and how to do this, but actually having them apply some of their techniques into here, I think that would help them learn more.

I think that would be great to see somebody have both degrees because that means they are not just focusing on one thing. They are open to like new experiences.

I would say it’s more about the experience. And then, if the person is really good at what they know, they are able to bring more experience to you.

I think they should have some observations, and their interactions with other people because that is going to be a big key.

If they did not learn before, they are going to learn during the experiences. So, I think it is great even just do like a little fresh course. Even just a half of semester, different paper works they might be involved. You might want to do that towards the end of your college before going to the work for instead doing it at the begging because the begging, you just having anything to do with what I am going to get into. And then also, I think like even if the professor had some like set up more one or one type of interviewing even like this (as the researcher in this study). Asking questions on what they know. That would help the students to decide what they want to go, and what they want to do whenever they get out of the college.

And this could even good for even students in the BA degree in undergraduate. And that could maybe like a first course. Beginning of the freshman year, you might want to go and ‘Hey, can you interview this person and this person, and this person just to get an idea what you want to go because then you can expend from that. Like you might be an early education, but if you find out that ‘I do not want to be an…’ ‘I want to go for this’. Then you can switch up.

The PT (Individual Interview, August 2009)

I think practicum experiences and hands on experiences are probably the biggest need. I mean the internships that you would assume come at the end. The practicum is once a week, and I would say more practicum experiences, even observation is important because you can study all you
wanted in the book, but you do not have come personal experience related to. That does not really talk about practicum time. To me, rather than waiting towards the end of your experience, I think you can do even though the first or second semester. Start off doing some observations. Maybe not expect to do anything, but some observations, so that you have some personal experiences. As far as training things, I think throughout education, it should be talked about the inclusion, about the collaboration. I know for me as vision teacher that was a big part of our methods courses was on collaboration team-building and all of that. I think that is important for background coursework in collaboration, in team-building, in conflict management because there is a conflict, all of that I think very important. The whole thing is just preparing them to have that expectation and openness to inclusion to teach them to collaborate. But they also need courses in exceptional children, working with exceptional children, children with special needs. In addition to, other coursework and just more practical experience.

Again, the stress was on the need for (1) more cross-fields learning, especially more SPLED courses in ECE; (2) more collaborative courses in teacher preparation programs, not only among teachers but also teacher-parents and teacher-agency; and (3) more hands-on courses, including student teaching. In this last, in individual interviews, the participants suggested things very descriptively. They recommended more involvement in actual settings, and not only practicum in settings but also observations and interviews. Three out of six mentioned that they were intrigued by this study being conducted in their setting. They pointed out that interviewing teachers is a good idea for student teachers, before they get into actual settings and classrooms. The OT stated the practicum period needed to be longer and more frequent, and the Director added that student teachers should be sent out sooner, not waiting until the end of senior year. (4) There needs to be a balance between theory and practice; (5) personality is a key to success in inclusive programs. be open-minded, be flexible, be a good communicator, be responsible for children and enjoy what you do, be proactive in own learning, but be not stubborn; (6) the
participants stressed ‘Behavior Management’ in classrooms that uses different approaches with different children; since there were both children with and without special needs, there are various behavior issues and teachers need to deal with various behavior managements; (7) the importance of assessment was emphasized by the participants. Because children with special needs can be diagnosed by the age of 2, 3, or 4, teachers in inclusive settings need to know how to assess children; (8) all participants mentioned about both ECE and SPLED fields; the Director stated that combining two fields take longer to get a degree then the need to blend well; another participant suggested unifying two fields with balance; and (9) conflicts and resolution were mentioned for the first time; a participant pointed out the need for creating a conflicts and resolution course, referring to conflicts among teachers or between groups which will be described in Chapter 7 with collaboration.
CHAPTER 7

COLLABORATION

“We are on the same page.”

(Lead Teacher A-Individual Interview, August 2009)

“We are one big collaboration team for our children.”

(The Program Support Staff member-Individual Interview, August 2009)

“We are not going to survive against one another, and I do not have all answers.”

(The Director-Individual Interview, August 2009)

In the Chapter 6 data collection, the participants frequently stated that collaboration is one of the “must have’s” for teachers in inclusive programs. The participants’ definition of collaboration was not limited to teacher-to-teacher. The participants also mentioned that collaboration included teacher-to-parents and teacher-to-outside agency collaborations. Both teachers and children received benefits from the outcomes of teacher collaboration. The participants made it a point that teachers need to collaborate with diverse groups of people to provide appropriate services for children with and without special needs. Collaboration also improves professional development of teachers of inclusive programs, and teachers learn from other teachers with diverse backgrounds. The participants put a great deal of effort into collaborating with others in various ways, formally and informally.
Difference has two faces in the aspect of collaboration; first, teachers learn what they do not know from other teachers in different fields, and second, teachers experience conflicts because of their differences. The participants provided their personal stories when they had conflicts with others in the setting, and they also stated how they solved the conflicts. The emergent themes are following.

Table 11. Emergent Themes: Collaboration

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Collaboration in the setting

Collaboration was one of the main themes in this study, and the participants often mentioned it when they talked about inclusion, ECE and SPLED, and professional development. It showed the participants perceived the importance of collaboration in their teaching in the setting. Actually, the participants suggested the need to create collaboration courses for teacher preparation programs and commented on the value of collaboration for novice teachers. However, when the researcher asked the participants to describe their own collaboration, they could not answer immediately. The reason for the delay
was that collaboration is natural, and they did not think about how they did it; instead of pointing out how the participants collaborated in the setting one by one, they said, “We just do it.”

Collaboration in the setting was also noticed during the researcher’s observation and shadowing. When the participants stated that they held meetings for collaboration among teachers, the researcher attended to observe. Actually, collaboration was all over the setting; in classrooms, outdoor playrooms, even in the hallway. The participants provided plenty of information of collaboration, especially the practice way of collaboration in the setting.

We just do it. (Everyone laughed so hard) (The Director- Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

Collaboration is hard, but here I think works very well. (The Program Support Staff member- Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

1. Work as a team

The participants defined collaboration as such. ‘Work as a team’. Since there are teachers with different backgrounds and different types of educators with various approaches on the site, collaboration among those different educators required them to work together as a team.

We are not going to survive for working against one another. So, being a team and learning from one another because I do not have all the answers. I mean none of these staff in this building have a similar personality, but they have similar drive to succeed with children. We are all very different. We all have different approaches. We all deal with stress in different ways. So, I think we do maintain a lot of individuality, but we have to have similar drive to succeed with these children. I strongly believe that whether you are in the teacher's role or the Director's role, you should have a sense of shared, a leadership ability with them in the classroom. (The Director-Individual Interview, August 2009)
We are work as the team to collaborate, so if one of the classroom teachers is not sure how to best meet the needs of a child with special needs in the classroom, we work with each other and we all kind of work each other and we all kind of work each other special education support and regular education support.

We just are one big collaborative team for our children. (The Program Support Staff member-Individual Interview, August 2009)

We are all work as a team and we want to make sure that we are on the same page. We are all doing the same exact thing. And we also that we trains those skills as much as we can to the parents, so we want to make sure that we are united front. (Lead Teacher A-Individual Interview, August 2009)

I guess my expectation is for us work together. That is the main thing and keeping to open communication in order for us all collaboratively work together. (Lead Teacher B-Individual Interview, August 2009)

The teachers on the site described themselves as a big collaborative team to meet goals for children with all abilities in the setting. They need to have a similar drive to teach children with and without special needs, although every teacher had a different personality and background. The Program Support Staff member pointed out that collaboration also meant supporting each others, that teachers with different approaches help one another in knowledge and skill wise.

2. Collaboration and in-service training

As the Program Support Staff member mentioned collaboration as a way of acquiring professional development, other participants also indicated that they learned through collaborating with other teachers at the site.

From the therapist that they give us a lot of ideas, and what they are working on, so that we can also generalize skills within the classroom. And then also not just collaboration of the teachers and staff here, but we also report to parents what we are doing. That way they can also be
working on the same thing, like home to generalize skills. So, it just
collaborative team efforts make sure that all students, their needs are being
met. (Lead Teacher A- Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

I came with the sign language background. Lead Teacher B came with
social work backgrounds, and the Program Support Staff member came
with a special ed. background and emphasis on assistive technology. Well,
when the three of us in the classroom, I learned how to be more patient
with challenging parents from Lead Teacher B. And I learned how to do
picture scheduling and other adaptive developments from the Program
Support Staff member. And they learned how to use the sign language
piece with non-verbal children from me. That's my philosophy we have to
keep learning from one another regardless of our backgrounds. A lot of
time the most successful collaborations we see are when we can look at
our child.
If you have one with special education background and the other with
early education background, who willing to leave enough the others’ world
to support one another. I think that would be the ideal because then they
are got different philosophies, special ed. philosophy and early ed.
philosophy. And they are able to help each others, see how to work
together like puzzle. (The Director- Individual Interview, August 2009)

Lead Teacher A only had regular education background before she came
here. Now she is doing special education background, but she had
questions about how to do something on the IEP or how to meet the needs
of the children. She asked one of us who has special education background,
whereas we have another new teacher in another classroom. She only has
special education background, so she was asking some of us who has more
regular education backgrounds that how to meet the needs of those
children or how to do general curriculum kind of things that she might not
have experienced with. (The Program Support Staff member-Individual
Interview, August 2009)

Teachers with different approaches and practices share their knowledge and skills with
one another. The way teachers at the site learn through collaboration is a complementary
cooperation. Since the site needs various educational approaches and practices to meet
the needs of all the children, not one teacher alone has all the answers. Therefore,
teachers at the site work together as a team and rely on one another.
3. Formal and informal ways of collaboration

The participants described the way they collaborate each other formally and informally. All participants agreed that their primary way of collaboration is through site meetings; these were considered as formal ways of collaboration.

I did say just like collaboration in general that is meeting on Wednesday, so everybody has a good idea, what is going on, and what need to be done. It is just a good check for us to see what everybody is at. And it includes everybody in this school like all the teachers and all the therapists, we all meet together like every Wednesday. Or if it is not on Wednesday, we schedule at like separate time. (Lead Teacher B- Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

We have regular meetings. We meet every week, particularly on Wednesday as team of teachers and all of therapists. We sit down and talk about particular children. We talk about what people's work is coming up, what meetings, and any issues the parents brought up, so deal out that way. I also meet the lead classroom teachers about every other week, and we talk about curriculum, we talk about particular student's behavior issues that everybody might to collaborate on. (The Program Support Staff member-Individual Interview, August 2009)

We have therapists and teachers meeting, so it is like the OT, PT, and speech therapists meet with teachers, the lead teachers. And then whenever those meetings done, the lead teachers are to transfer the information to the assistant teachers if it is relevant to your assistant teachers. So everybody is on the same page. (Lead Teacher B-Individual Interview, August 2009)

As the participants opined that it was difficult to facilitate inclusion due to the heavy workloads and to play both general and special teacher roles in a classroom, it became apparent that it is really helpful for teachers in inclusive program to work with someone who can provide direct and fast information to teachers when they need it in order to give proper service to children. The participants pointed to the mentoring system and peer-coaching or peer observations as ways of collaboration on the site.
I think mentor teachers are really helpful, again some part of my new role. So, we have two new teachers this year, and spend my job to mentor them to go into their classroom and help them. One new teacher, for example, had a class on behavior management, but the problem is now how to put them into the place. I go in and kind of help her to test out some of these behavior techniques, so she learned about and see what fits for her style and her age group in her classroom. I think it's really important for new teachers that safety net, so that they can try the things that they have learned. (The Program Support Staff member-Individual Interview, August 2009)

We are also collaborate a lot of curriculum, and I, in my new role, give the teachers the standards that they need to address themes, but then we also need to talk about activities that we cannot share, and kind of level them to the different classes obviously. But the teachers do a lot of collaboration on their theme and planning. (The Program Support Staff member-Individual Interview, August 2009)

We did peer coaching last year. We tried that out. (Lead Teacher A-Individual Interview, August 2009)

(Peer-observing) You pick another teacher in the building. You have them come and observe you. You pick a topic of what you want them to see what you are doing. And they come in a couple hours like collect data with the observations. And then they talk you about after wards. And you come up with game plan together how you can improve as a teacher. So, there is that collaboration going on with other teachers in the building. You do not say ‘great or not’. You think about it to figure out how can I approve this interaction with this student or how can I approve my instructional teaching methods or whatever you want to work on. And then it is like self-awareness. (Lead Teacher A-Individual Interview, August 2009)

The PT mentioned very unique method of collaboration that no others pointed out. She described paperwork (such as IEPs) that describes the developments of children with special needs and their progress. Writing and keeping and IEP is usually a therapists’ job, but classroom teachers can discover how much their children develop through reading IEPs. The site had computerized the IEPs of children and allowed the teachers to share them, and teachers could communicate better with others about the children.
I guess another way we collaborate is for the paper work, IEPs. So, a little bit different now because we use computerized program. So, what we do now is we all have this program on our computers, and we kind of put together our piece and insert into the computer, and make this big document of. We all contribute this to this document. (The PT-Individual Interview, August 2009)

Not only did the teachers at the site collaborate formally, they collaborated casually in informal ways, such as emails, talking on the phones, using Face book, or chatting both in and outside the setting. They also had social events outside of the site, engendering close relationships and an ease of collaboration with each other.

I think we are always talking. There is time I can step in and the lead teachers and I always touch them face really quick. I think we are kind of all pretty easy going about that as long as that person is not dealing with 100 percents with a child at that moment. I think we are doing it all the times. (The OT- Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

The OT mentioned an informal way of collaborating with lead teachers as a therapist. They always shared ideas for their children. Other participants commented that they shared because the setting was small; the size of the setting made it possible to share with other teachers all the time. Other participants added their own personal experiences with other teachers in the setting.

There is a lot of informal collaboration. This is a small school, so teachers chat at the playground, teachers chat in here, teacher's room while eating lunch. There is a lot going on, and there is a lot have through emails. I am sure that each other often emails and say, 'I am not so sure how to work with this goal or how to work on this'. There is a high level of collaboration happening in here. (The Program Support Staff member-Individual Interview, August 2009)

Then, all the times email and in a person. They just walk into classroom, or any time a day. But it is a smaller environment here, so easy to do that at any time, whereas in elementary school or middle school or high school, you do not have the luxury of having all you therapist on site at all times
within walking distance (laughed). (Lead Teacher A-Individual Interview, August 2009)

We could go over and talk, plus we have each other’s cell phones and emails and face book. They do a lot of emails as well. (Lead Teacher A-Individual Interview, August 2009)

Collaboration is an important element for facilitating inclusion and there are various ways to collaborate on the site. Collaboration occurs among teachers in the site, such as between assistant teachers and lead teachers, between lead teachers and therapists, and between teachers on the site and at outside agencies. The participants identified some of those who collaborated at the site;

There is outside agency. For students who need behavioral intervention, we work with some programs. We might have students they need more help with behaviors rather than cognitive skills. They need behavioral interventions, so that we have therapeutic support staff (TSS) or behavioral specialists inside of classroom, and also giving us interventions to use to help children's succeed. So, we have to collaborate with them because they might have whole separate treatment plans. (Lead Teacher A- Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

Lead Teacher B and I worked in the same classroom when she began here. I think another piece to as the lead teacher if you do not have right assistant teacher, right help, and teachers help and support you have. When having Lead Teacher B in the classroom, we were together that was great because you have to be able to support one another with those demands. (The Director- Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

And also from the therapist that they give us a lot of ideas, and what they are working on, so that we can also generalize skills within the classroom. I need to be able to collaborate between any support staff with in the classroom and outside classroom, such as speech and OT and PT, the therapists come in, I need to be able to know what their goals are him or her. So, it’s already including that therapist, parents, and two teachers, we all come in together to make sure that the best goals are written for this student to make sure that he is successful in the classroom (Lead Teacher A-Individual Interview, August 2009)

I expect all members of this setting, and the outside of agencies work together because I feel that is the most important key in helping children.
We have like therapists meetings, therapists and teachers meetings, parents and teachers meetings, and so that we’re getting collaboration with parents, therapists, and teachers, trying to work as one. We do behavior specialists meetings which means that different behavior specialists from different agencies that have, like TSS in the classrooms. (Lead Teacher B- Individual Interview, August 2009)

The participants shared their experiences of collaboration with different types of teachers, such as lead teachers and assistant teachers, lead teachers and therapists, and others. The Director stressed a very important fact: when teachers collaborate in the setting, the children are always at the center of collaboration. This suggests that teachers collaborate for their children in the setting in order to provide better service. At the same time, however, teachers learn and share that they need to teach children with and without special needs from others who use different approaches and methods. The participants often mentioned collaboration with outside agencies that provide therapists, behavior specialists, and TSS. Lead Teacher B also mentioned collaboration with parents, which is very important and difficult.

The participants told stories of collaboration on the site. These short stories help better understand collaboration among teachers and parents in inclusive settings.

They rely on one another, and it is something that has not always happen. When I started here, that was not the case. So, it is a culture, and I think that the people we hire now, our people with that type of investment in the culture that says we are here to help one another. We are not here to compete with one another. (The Director- Individual Interview, August 2009)

I think, as I said, working with parents that help them to understand how to help their child's development, and communicating with parents about what is going on in the classroom and how the child is doing. (The Program Support Staff member-Individual Interview, August 2009)

We are pretty lucky at this site in that. We spend a lot of time here. Many times the therapists really come to a site to work with child, and then have
to go to another site, whereas, the speech therapist is really full time here. She is a speech therapist. She is full time here, and the occupational and I spend the bulk of our time, the majority of our time here. So, that is a big fact is that we are on site, so we are available more. And that gives us more opportunities for collaboration. (The PT-Individual Interview, August 2009)

I am half time PT and half time vision at this point. As vision teacher, I do more collaboration with planning. I think you met Bled, a little boy who is completely blind. So, for Bled, there is a lot adaptation thing need to be made, and his everyday experiences, and a lot of equipment that need to be put in the classroom. I mean there is a brail on his chair and a brail blocks in the block area. He has brail calendar to feel at calendar time. But, for example Bled, there is a theme coming up, like one month, they did farm animals. So, I brought in a kit that had all a lot of farm animal information. Everything from stuff animal that may sounds, that he could feel and listen to a toy that it is called as ‘see and say’. You crank in it and makes animal sounds and thing like that. A teacher was reading a book to whole class. And this child needs to have things very close for him to see. So, ahead of time, she showed with me what her lesson plan is going to be and through the library I was be able to find another book that identical what she was reading. So, rather than him being kind of lost, just having listen to the book while we had another book for him there. And she was reading the story, but he is very young child compare to the other children, so, as she was reading the story, we were looking at the pictures and taking about the pictures, so that they were right there. So, that would be an example of some team-teaching. And again, one of the biggest things we do is to provide adaptations either materials or equipments for PT, things like that. (The PT-Individual Interview, August 2009)

Although the participants provided endless stories of their collaboration experiences on the site, they also noted how much it is difficult to collaborate sometimes with one another. The reasons were varied: different approaches teachers have, teachers’ personal issues, time conflicts, and the difficulties of relationships with parents.

I think that collaboration can be challenging. I think internally we do it better than some other places, but that does not mean that everyone that
we are expecting to collaborative with. When you think about the regular education and special ed. teachers and therapists, and parents, and behavioral specialists, everybody’s goal is the child. But sometimes, it can be hard when you try to get on the same pages of how to achieve those goals.

Just reflecting being in the classroom, I think another piece is that as the lead teacher if you do not have right assistant teacher, right help, and teachers help and support you have.

The most difficult, I was, unfortunately I want to have to say the most difficult collaboration relationship is probably the parents because you do not know if things are being generalized in home setting. A lot of times you do see what you put in places in school stuff there, and students are required to work as harder as at home because it is more lay back atmospheres. I would say that is probably the most difficult collaborative relationship. (Lead Teacher A-Individual Interview, August 2009)

So that was probably just more about struggle personally than anything else. I think that is the biggest conflict whatever someone says one thing and does completely opposite here. (Lead Teacher B-Individual Interview, August 2009)

I would say awkward communication. If you do not have a good team, the team might not be meeting as often as they need to, or you might not be talking to the therapists often than you need to. They might not be talking to you often. They also might be going around and telling another people that you are doing something wrong instead of addressing problem with you. (Lead Teacher B-Individual Interview, August 2009)

Time constraint. To sit down as often as we would like as a group. Once a week thing is over the lunch period. We can probably sit down everyday and have a stuff to talk about. But nobody has time to do it. And schedule conflicts. I think for our team, those are two of biggest. (The PT-Individual Interview, August 2009)

One of the personal issues that cause difficulties with collaborating is communication skills. If someone does not have well-developed communication skills, it causes others difficulty when communicating with the person. The participants listed several other skills teachers need to teach in inclusive programs with good collaboration.

We should have good communicate skills. You have to be able to listen and take other views or ideas or consideration, and use them. (Lead Teacher A-Individual Interview, August 2009)
You need to be able to be flexible, and to be multi tasks at the same time because there’s always an interruption (laughed). And just the flexibility is the key thing as well. You need to be flexible, and your schedule in with everyone. If you need to work on something with this person, you talk and have a meeting. Then you might have to do the same thing with another person, but you might have to in a different way. So, it is just whole flexibility and communication skills are the main. (Lead Teacher B- Individual Interview, August 2009)

Probably most important thing I think is good attitude and openness to it because if you willing to try, you can probably do anything. (The PT- Individual Interview, August 2009)

Everyone’s voices are heard. As a team, you would all bring ideas for the table, and everybody is ok to try different things and see what works and what does not work. It will be open communication. You have to be flexible and adoptable as teacher for whoever comes to your classroom. (Lead Teacher A-Individual Interview, August 2009)

Good communication skills, flexibility, and openness are most frequently mentioned skills that teachers in inclusive settings need to have successful collaboration with other teachers. According to the Director, differences can cause difficulties when teachers collaborate. It was interesting to note, however, that the differences of teachers were also noted to help their professional development and provide the opportunity to collaborate among teachers. Another point of difficulty with collaboration was time. Since teachers are always busy, they do not have much time to sit and talk together. Finally, the Director mentioned ‘human culture’ (the philosophy or personality of people who work with you) as an issue in the setting that affected collaborating among teachers with her own experience. Lead Teacher A supported the Director’s observation, that how it is difficult to collaborate, in her individual interview. She spoke about two points: one was that
collaborating with parents was difficult, and the other was insufficient time for teachers to collaborate with others.

From the observations and shadowing, the researcher witnessed a team teaching with a therapist and a lead teacher.

<Episode 1>
I saw a collaboration team teaching in the classroom. Lead Teacher B and the OT teach together with children in art activity. They have to communicate each other because the OT needs to know the goal for the day, then she can help her children with special needs to approach the goal as much as closer. For example, Lead Teacher B tried to teach some letters through an art work. Then the OT can help the child with special needs to do the art work. Even during the moment, the teacher and the therapist talked a lot. Also they learned each other’s learning style, for example, how to praise children, make children work such as repeating.

August 18, 2009 (10.35 am)

Although the participants described the skills to successful collaboration with others, conflicts among teachers happen at the site. The participants talked about their experiences of having conflicts in the site and the solutions.

**Conflict and the solution**

As the Director pointed out, there are several difficulties that teachers may experience while working with each other. These difficulties may be linked to conflict between teachers who share and work together. When a person is
involved in a conflict with another person, she usually has expectations of the other person. When the expectations are not well met, there is usually a conflict.

Therefore, the researcher asked the participants about their expectations of others they had worked with.

I think my biggest expectation when working with someone who has regular education background is to have open minded and flexible. I think those are the biggest things that they listen to my suggestions, and they will not just close down the gap, but I wanted to do it this way in my classroom. Here, that there are the other ways to do things that meet the needs, especially those disabilities. Upon my experiences working with my son's regular education teacher, again getting them to understand that there is more than one way to do things, and be open minded about doing things differently. (The Program Support Staff member-Individual Interview, August 2009)

I think the expectation is that you have to be willing to learn. That is really the biggest expectation. I think I just expect that none of us have all the answers. So, as long as we keep working together and communicating being a team which is something I cannot emphasize enough in this community. (The Director-Individual Interview, August 2009)

I guess my expectation is for us work together. That is the main thing and keeping to open communication in order for us all collaboratively work together. And if I need a pointer, they get something from me, and they are able to ask me. I feel like the whole collaboration part is the biggest thing that I expect all members of the site, and the outside of agencies work together because I feel that is the most important key in helping children. (Lead Teacher B-Individual Interview, August 2009)

We want to make sure that we are on the same page. We are all doing the same exact thing. And we also that we trains those skills as much as we can to the parents, so we want to make sure that we are united front. (Lead Teacher A-Individual Interview, August 2009)

As a therapist, for me to go in and make recommendations, my expectations are that they are honest with me. Do not say ‘Ok, I will do that, and then not do it. If you think you cannot that into your routine, tell me and I will solve the problem with you. When I make recommendations so forth, I expect some honesty and, ‘Can we try for a little while, see if it work. (The OT-Individual Interview, August 2009)
The participants expected other teachers to be able to work together; they did not want knowledge or teaching skills, but a willingness to work and learn together as a team. These expectations are strongly related to teacher collaboration. It infers that when expectations are not met, conflicts may occur.

If there are more than two persons with different ideas, there may be conflicts all the time. Since the participants had observed that ECE and SPLED coexisted in the program, they subsequently mentioned that they experienced conflicts with other members in the setting. Conflict does not always produce a bad result, if the right solution is followed. The participants described their own experiences with conflicts and resolutions working with other members in the inclusive setting.

(Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

The approach, the perspective, I guess the perception of the approach for the particular child's behavior was very different. (The Director-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

I think just from having even outside agency disagrees with me, and I disagree with them, I think that arranging meetings even though might be disagrees with so many other things. Usually by the end of the meeting, there is something that we can try, so still we are working together. We have to work it out with trying new things, and so even though I might not agree with that person, I will say, 'You know what, we will give to try this week and see how it works. And if it is not work, then let's try in my way'. If you disagree, we have to find some types of happy median, so that we are both happy and both willing to go on with the child. So, just help them and, so just introducing like new strategies even asking feedbacks from other people around you and say what do you think and then asking maybe, if there was a therapeutic support staff (TSS) and be like behavioral specialists, just see like what and where they stands, and what the other person stands. It just comes up with different ideas, so that we can work it out. (Lead Teacher B-Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

We create this new role for me to do IEP supports. Last year was a little crazy with me, but this school year that I can help to provide more of the mediation between the different groups and help them. I hope that the
collaboration piece a little bit more between parents, outside forks, and other forks. (The Program Support Staff member- Focus Group Interview, August 2009)

The issue of conflict was not comfortable to talk about in the focus group interview, so the participants spoke indirectly and generally about conflict. They mentioned how they solved conflicts when they faced disagreements with other members in the program rather than discussing actual conflicts they had in the past. However, they definitely admitted that they experienced or saw conflicts between teachers. When the OT firmly admitted the existence of conflicts, the Director observed that differences may result in conflicts. She pointed that one of the differences was that teachers worked full-time or part-time. She drew a line between the lead teachers (full-time) and the therapists (part-time), and there was an awkward moment. In addition, Lead Teacher B noted the point that there was a conflict between teachers and some therapists, who were considered as outside agency members. In the focus group interview, however, no further details emerged.

Because the participants spared their words about conflicts, the researcher intentionally asked them to give examples of conflicts in the setting. As a result, each participant provided personal stories in detail.

Lead Teacher B (Individual Interview, August 2009)

I have in the past, not necessarily the teachers. Well, actually I can say that because I did have an assistant at one time that did not know what to do with children, so it was very difficult for me because I always have to remind her that ‘you need to be doing this, this, and that helps the child.’ So that was probably just more about struggle personally than anything else.
But I have also had conflicts with therapists. They would tell me one thing and then go around and do completely the opposite. So then, I say that ‘What should I do, you’re telling me this, but I do not understand why we
cannot, why you are doing this? Do you know what I mean?’ I think that is
the biggest conflict whatever someone says one thing and does completely
opposite here.
But the way we work through it is having more meetings, introducing
more people in the meeting, so that we’re all working together. And if that
does not work, hold another meetings and just people continuing to bring
parents, get the parents involve, and what is their opinion and what should
be done. Ultimately the main thing is get parents involve and get their
suggestions.
I had a child would not eat, and at first the therapist put the food in his
mouth, and then helped to swallow. Later on, I found out that the therapist
was telling the parents that I was not following the order she wanted us to
do. And so that caused the conflict because the parents like ‘Why you are
doing this? The therapist said so and so on’. So, it is like she said and he
said type deal. And then, once that was brought out to the open which was
probably a month after I started doing it, and I had the child eating, but not
the way she wanted him to eat. So, we arranged a meeting, and we brought
everything on the table and said, the parents told me ‘That’s exactly how
we feed the child at home’. But the therapist said like, ‘I do not know that
is good for the child’. So, I am like, ‘I would try whatever you want me to
try, so, we made up pictures of food input the match had the child, match
the food with the pictures. And then either give the kiss or give the lick.
So, we would backwards or the kid was eating anymore and just touching
food. It was completely different thing, but I know since there was
switching therapists, the way I was doing before certain happening again.
And now the child is eating. So it just always conflict, and just trying work
things out. It was very frustrating because I was more angry than anything
because like ‘What are they tell me do this, and I cannot do this now
because they want to me do this’. So, it is just very frustrating and very
angry. But I was able to keep my core and talk with the therapists. I think
that was the most important thing for me that I was not like, complaining.
I was more complaining to myself, but I was like ‘I do not understand
this? Can we work things out?
If I would known that she want me to do that, there would been no conflict
at all because I would just follow what she told me to do because I rather
do what she does because she is the expert at feeding. So, I think if that
would brought out like a day after I started what I was doing, that thing
would not have go so long.

Lead Teacher B explained her experiences of conflicts with other teachers in the
site in detail. Most conflicts occurred because of different teaching approaches not
understanding what another teachers was doing. However, teachers at the site were not
afraid to find the solutions when they had conflicts with other teachers. They sat down and talked, or a third person stepped in to mediate between the two parties. The people who intervene in a conflict were usually the Director or the Program Support Staff member. One of the main roles of the Director was to prevent and manage conflicts among teachers. She also described her new role.

It is kind of my job in my new role. So, set up the meetings, kind of facilitate the meetings themselves gets kind of ball rolling with the discussions. So, I think I put a lot of efforts into making sure that the collaboration happens because that's probably my new roles of, kind of set up time and plans to do that, and I follow through to make sure that things we agreed upon we were having a team meeting, and really happening that the collaboration is happening. (The Program Director-Individual Interview, August 2009)

The OT (Individual Interview, August 2009)

There also some personality issues there too. I worked at this setting 8 years ago when the staff was completely different. It was not always that. It was not always like that. I attribute to the staff. I attribute to the individual we’re working with because it was not always like that. When I talk about this setting not always being as collaborative as it is now, I think the Director has a lot to do it. I think that because she (the Director in the setting now) was a teacher, she is very respectful of her teachers. She has always been very open to have therapists in the building and in the classroom that was not always the situation. So I think the Director has a lot to do with.

The OT mentioned that teachers’ personalities also caused conflicts, and she explained the chemistry of the site several years ago when teachers were different. At that time, the site was not as well collaborated. The OT determined the reason for that was the culture of the people as they worked together. She also stressed the importance of the Director’s desire not to have a conflict and her role as one to solve it.
The PT (Individual Interview, August 2009)

So, safety sometimes concern with children with physical disabilities, and sometimes just cognitive skills. Many of our children, in addition to, for example, child with down syndrome, they make PT, but also they might not have the cognitive skills to do the other activities that in classroom. So, you have to think how to adapt. And I think sometimes, the children rest behind because it just does not meet their needs. So, sometimes, we just need to add the adaptations. You have to find the way to fit them in, or maybe give them alternative activities, sometimes that can be helpful.

The PT pointed out the critical issue of the lead teachers’ approach: that they may leave out children with special needs because the children cannot follow a curriculum fit for typically developing children. She noted that the classroom curriculum needed to be adapted and modified to meet each individual’s needs.

The Director (Individual Interview, August 2009)

I think some of the conflict can coming not as open conflict that I can think people arguing. But within the same classrooms, I think that gets harder, not so much between the lead teachers or assistant teachers. But in the same classroom, 'Is the lead teacher letting the assistant teacher participate enough as a part of the team. Or the flip side, is the lead teacher feeling a little overwhelmed, and letting the assistant teacher take too much of the burden of running the classrooms. So, I think those can be the though pieces.

Then across the program, and also just the therapists obviously have goals, they are coming in with their goals in special ed. And they do a really nice job, but sometimes that's their only goal. So, they may want us to do something in a different time flame than we want to, in a different approach that we want to. So, takes a lot of conversations. And sometimes there is frustration on that absolutely. We can talk and see different perspectives.

Time is always essence because it is hard when you have got schedule and they have schedule to maintain that to find some time to actually have quality conversation.

One of the reasons the researcher conducted two different types of interviews was to see how the participants showed different attitudes in the group and individual
interviews. As the length of dialogues in the individual interviews indicates, there were conflicts among teachers in the setting. The participants’ overall self-evaluation of conflicts and solutions in the setting was fairly positive. However, almost all participants mentioned that it was not positive several years ago, before the current Director was hired. The situation was interpreted in two ways: that individual personalities and the role of Director played key parts in making conflicts among teachers.

Although the lead teachers mentioned conflict with an assistant teacher, conflicts occurred between lead teachers and therapists, caused in the matter of teaching children. Each participant explained conflicts in the setting providing her own experiences, but there was a communication issue at the core of conflicts between the lead teachers and therapists. For example, Lead Teacher B explained with an experience: when a therapist had a disagreement with a Lead Teacher about a child’s behavior, the therapist needed to communicate with the lead teacher first, not with the child’s parents.

The Program Support Staff member and the PT shared a common issue of needing adaptations in teaching children with special needs. The Program Support Staff member directly pointed that general educators needed to use individualized instruction for each child, and the PT also stated that lead teachers need to make modifications and adaptations when they teach children with and without special needs. When lead teachers did not consider this well, the therapists grew frustrated, and conflicts resulted.

As the participants indicated, the more differences between members in the setting, the more they were involved in conflicts. They mentioned conflicts between members or groups, but they mostly described those between teachers (represent the
setting) and therapists (representing an outside agency). Figure 7 shows possible relationship conflict and the frequency and major group of conflicts.

![Diagram of possible conflicts between relationships]

Figure 6. Possible Conflicts between Relationships

None of the participants reported conflicts with upper rank staff members such as conflicts between lead teachers and the Director; instead they indicated that the Director or the Program Support Staff member were involved in developing solutions to conflicts.

The participants discussed how they solved conflicts with other members. Sometimes, they set up a meeting. The Director felt it was important to share the conflicts with other members of the setting who might be able to offer help. Another solution was to use a mediator such as the Director or the Program Support Staff member. The participants reported that when they faced a conflict, they went to the Program Support Staff member first. If the conflict was overwhelming for her, she went to the Director. The most frequent solution to conflict was to sit and talk about the matter and try different ways to resolve the conflict.

In summary, collaboration between teachers was not easy, but it was necessary. The participants defined collaboration in the setting as the sharing of ideas or information about children to provide the best and most appropriate services for them. The methods of collaboration in the setting were formal (attending various meetings) and informal...
Teachers in the setting shared responsibility for the children. This study found that no matter what the teachers’ academic backgrounds were, they needed to be responsible for children both with and without special needs. Some teachers had special education degrees and others had general education degrees, but they needed to set goals for all children regardless of their abilities. It was a little different for therapists who had special education degrees and specific training and mostly worked for children with special needs. However, the therapists included typically developing children in their therapy sessions with children with special needs, under the parents’ permissions. They did this on purpose as peer-modeling for children with special needs. Therefore, no matter whether the teachers’ degrees were in general or special education, all teachers needed to deal with children having all levels of needs. This fact required teacher collaboration in the setting.

Teachers in the setting learned about general and special education in various ways, especially from teacher meetings. When this researcher observed several meetings, the teachers shared information from personal items about each child to the curriculum of the week or new regulations. They did not hesitate to ask questions, and other teachers gave advice. Not only in the meetings but also in classrooms and on playgrounds, teachers and therapists communicated about children or their plans for children all the time. All these communications made it easy to collaborate.
One way this setting provided better collaboration among teachers was through the creation of a new role, the Program Support Staff member. She had both general and special education backgrounds with plenty of teaching experience in an inclusive program. The ultimate purpose of the new role was to help teachers in the setting. She provided the curriculum plan, gave specific information teachers asked for, and also managed the relationships among teachers.

Teacher collaboration was at its peak during moments of team-teaching for children with special needs. As the OT and PT noted, they usually set up their therapy sessions in classrooms with other children. During these, they sometimes jointly dealt with a child at the same time. They arranged their therapy sessions according to the general curriculum the lead teachers planned for all children in the classroom. For example, if an art project was planned for the day, the OT used the art project as a tool in her therapy session. At that time, Lead Teacher and the therapist sat at the same table to work with the child with special needs, and this process helped them to learn different approaches of dealing with the child. This teaching moment was one the participants highlighted as contrasting with the situation in public schools: there is no real collaboration in public schools because therapists come in for a short period of time or pull out kids from the classrooms where their peers are. The OT, who goes to several different settings for therapy sessions, pointed out that there is no chance to talk with classroom teachers in public schools, and she wondered if the public classroom teachers really look at their children’s IEPs. Without collaboration, there may be distrust between teachers and therapists.
CHAPTER 8
ASSERTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, four categories of assertions are presented, generated by the findings of this study. Figure 7 shows the dynamic relation among these.

Figure 7. Relationship among Four Themes

As Figure 7 shows, the relationships among inclusion, cross-fields, professional development, and collaboration can be considered connected. When we talk about one of the four topics, other three topics followed naturally. Following an analysis of this, a discussion of implications for teacher education in early childhood education will be given, followed by recommendations for future research.

Assertions

Assertion 1: The definition of inclusion needs to be flexible depending on children’s abilities, particularly children with special needs, the number of children, and how severe their disabilities are. However, even with a
single child with special needs in a classroom, the teacher is required to prepare and provide the appropriate service for that child, thereby practicing inclusive education.

The inclusion of children from birth to six years in pre-school settings is a legal mandate and civil right articulated by the least restrictive environment provisions under IDEA (2004). According to the Joint Position Statement of DEC and NAEYC (2009), the definition of early childhood inclusion supports the right of every child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts. The definition of inclusion varies by educational divisions and educators, and the way teachers define inclusion affects their teaching.

The participants in this study were asked to define inclusion and the answers were interesting. The lead teachers described inclusion in almost the same terms as those in the Joint Position Statement: that children with special needs should participate in the environments with typically developing children. When the researcher asked, ”No matter how severe disabilities the children have?”, the lead teachers responded positively.

However, the therapists defined inclusion a little differently; both therapists highly valued the need and the benefits of inclusion, but they also asserted that one must first think of the individual child with special needs, and then think about inclusion. Although they had worked in inclusive programs for a long time and felt that educating children with and without special needs together is the best method of early childhood education, they believed educators need to consider the child’s condition as a priority. The degree of disability was of paramount importance to the therapists. The OT and the PT mentioned that they worked with children with special needs in various degrees and
settings, including segregated and home settings. They realized that inclusion is not for all children regardless of their abilities. For some children, especially those with severe disabilities, it is not always effective to use inclusion. Therefore, the therapists defined inclusion as what is appropriate, depending on the child, depending on his/her needs. The OT added that the goal is always to integrate children with special needs in a safe and beneficial manner appropriate to all of the children. Since the therapists had more experience with children having special needs than the lead teachers, they provided a more realistic meaning of inclusion.

The participants do indeed have a point. Although teachers may have only one child with special needs in their classroom, they have to be ready to provide proper education for that child. In many inclusive programs and also in public early childhood education settings, teachers are more likely to have one child or more with special education needs. Given the high probability of having children with special needs in ECE settings, early childhood educators and childcare providers must demonstrate knowledge and skills for teaching all children regardless of their needs. Such knowledge and skills assure that early childhood professionals are competent at using effective child guidance and positive behavior supports, which the participants emphasized often in their interviews.

When inclusion becomes the subject of discussion, there is always the issue of teacher preparation and qualification for inclusive programs. This study supports the view that teaching in inclusive programs is somewhat different than teaching in regular settings, and teachers perceived they need to acquire more knowledge and skills for inclusive education.
Assertion 2: Inclusion pertains to children with various abilities, but also to teachers from diverse backgrounds. This teacher diversity requires us to investigate ECE and SPLED fields as to how they are different or similar in teaching children and the approach to use depending the teachers’ role in general inclusive classrooms.

When the issue of inclusion emerged, children were spotlighted for their different abilities to learn, and teachers with different backgrounds received attention as well. With children of differing abilities, teachers with different skills and knowledge are needed to provide the best services. When people first pictured inclusive programs, they believed that there should be different teachers to meet children’s various needs. In this study, teachers with different skills included classroom teachers who dealt primarily with typically developing children, and therapists who focused on children with special needs. During the interviews, an interesting and unexpected fact emerged: the therapists in the setting did not call themselves ‘teachers’. In the individual interview with the OT, she balked when called ‘a teacher’.

I am not a teacher. But in my job, do I teach? Absolutely. And I am working with children with special needs specifically. Sure, I do think I am a special educator, but it’s just not my job title because occupational therapist is very different from a teacher. Occupational therapy is more health related, so I can’t say I am a teacher. But if you are talking in a broad term of special educator, sure, yes. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

The OT indicated that she was not in charge of a whole class but focused on a specific population. In this regard, there was no reason for special educators to study general education, particularly early childhood education. However, both the OT and the PT noted that they sometimes included typically developing children in their therapy
sessions for children with special needs, particularly when they provided therapy sessions in classrooms.

This study found that there was another category for differentiating teachers: their education degrees (general, early childhood and special education, although there was no limitation.) For example, Lead Teacher A had a degree in Physical Education and Lead Teacher B had a degree in Social Work; this study considered them as general education degrees. However, the Program Support Staff member (formerly a Lead Teacher) had a special education degree. The lead teachers all agreed that they played both dual roles (developmental for children with special needs and simply teachers for children without special needs) no matter what degree they held. This meant that the lead teachers differentiated their two roles, and they were required to have both skills and knowledge in ECE and SPLED.

As a result, there was diversity among the teachers as well as among the abilities of the children, and there was a need for cross-fields learning to provide appropriate service for all children, whether they had special needs or not. Providing more opportunities for inclusion required that ECE teachers, special teachers, therapists, and related service providers undergo changes in their roles as professionals. This fact was reflected in evaluating teacher preparation programs and teacher collaborations to identify the best options for inclusive programs in pre-school settings.

**Assertion 3**: Although the participants maintained that they try to balance ECE and SPLED in the program, they were more inclined toward special education principles of practice than toward ECE principles.
Nevertheless they aspired to be balanced in their roles in classrooms for children with and without special needs.

The philosophy of the program’s organization is ‘Help, hope, and answer’. The organization provides services, education, outreach, and advocacy so that people living with autism and other disabilities can live, learn, work and play in their communities. Under the influence of this philosophy, the program was inclined to facilitate SPLED. For example, the Director of the program directly described her preference for hiring teachers with SPELD backgrounds.

I think because they (teachers with SPELD backgrounds) already understand that each child as an individual and what works for one, what works for the other, whereas the individual with early childhood education backgrounds, like I said we had one was a remarkable. She understood play, she understood the importance of music and movement and cooperation. But that was where stopped. She didn’t understand that certain children need certain parameters. She didn’t know how to make those adaptations, and that was harder. They (ECE) were almost default some of them because they don’t understand. They haven’t seen at a practice. It’s not what they’re familiar with, and it’s easy for special ed. children in the early education. It’s not because there’s much more resume, and there’s much more structured. There used to be different density I think. So, teach them how to let go and understand of the children should got more of the play, and I think ‘can be more flexible’. It's hard, but for my perspective, it's not as hard as teaching early ed. person how to do all of the other elements that come with special ed. child. (Individual Interview, August 2009)

She pointed out a very sensitive matter: she assumed that SPLED teachers already understand children’s development in varying abilities because of SPLED’s focus on individual children with special needs, whereas teachers with ECE backgrounds do not understand specific disabilities and how to deal with them. Therefore, it was easier to teach ECE to teachers with SPELD backgrounds than to teach SPLED to teachers with ECE backgrounds. Two points arose for the Director: (1) Does an understanding of an
individual’s disabilities really cover for children’s development in all abilities? and (2) Do teacher preparation programs for ECE pay attention to children’s disabilities? The answers to these are not simple, but both are expected to be positive.

Unlike other public settings, the program investigated had a high ratio of children with special needs in each classroom. It aimed to have 60 percent children with special needs and 40 percent typically developing children in each classroom, but the reality was almost 50 to 50. Compared to other public settings, this percentage is huge. It might influence the inclination toward SPLED in this setting, while other public settings may incline more toward ECE because of a reversed ratio. However, we need to focus on the fundamental of inclusive education: no matter what the majority of children are in classrooms, teachers are required to provide appropriate services for children both with and without special needs.

Children with special needs literally need added special care compared to typically developing children, and the therapists must meet the special needs for these children. In the classrooms, the lead teachers need to focus on children both with and without special needs, and they need to be balanced when dealing with them. No matter what their backgrounds, they have to draw an exact well-managed Venn diagram with ECE, SPELD, and its intersection. If balancing between ECE and SPLED is not accomplished in inclusive classrooms, there is no real meaning of inclusion, but simply a different form of segregated or pull-out model.

A critical point is that none of the participants in this study have early childhood education backgrounds. The therapists had special education backgrounds, the lead teachers had general education backgrounds, and the Director and the Program Support
Staff member had special education backgrounds, although the Director was pursuing and
ECE degree. Recent research indicates that the education of early childhood professionals
is positively related to the quality of programs, and the quality of programs is related to
outcomes for children (Early & Winton, 2001). The setting, however, needs to be paid
attention to: given that there were no teachers with ECE knowledge and skills, a
fundamental element was missing from the program.

**Assertion 4:** Teachers with both general or ECE and SPLED backgrounds tend to
have more confidence in their knowledge and skills of teaching in
inclusive programs.

Some of teachers in the program had both general and special education
backgrounds and some were in the process of pursuing other degrees. The Director, who
had studied Deaf Education, was getting a master’s in ECE, and Lead Teacher A, who
studied Health and Physical Education, was getting a master’s in SPLED. In addition, the
Program Support Staff member had both special and elementary education, and the PT
had a degree in Human Development and Family Study as well as therapist training.
During the interviews about their teacher preparation programs, the participants who had
or were getting both degrees tended to describe their programs positively, while the
participants with only one degree described their preparation programs as doubtful. Lead
Teacher B and the OT had only one side degree; Lead Teacher B had social work, and the
OT had special education but never any general or ECE education. When Lead Teacher B
and the OT were asked about teachers’ professional development, both said that they
learned almost everything through experience, not from their teacher preparation
programs. On the other hand, the participants having multiple field backgrounds
explained their professional development by citing their teacher preparation programs and in-service training.

In a related observation, more than half of the participants had general and special education backgrounds. In addition, the Director and the Program Support Staff member had both general and special education backgrounds, and both of them were supposed to support other teachers and therapists. The Program Support Staff member, particularly, played very important and diverse roles for other teachers in the program; among them, mentor was a major role. Most participants agreed that it is beneficial for teachers to have both knowledge and skills to produce better outcomes for children with and without special needs. Again, for early childhood settings, teachers need to have ECE backgrounds specifically rather than having general education backgrounds to provide high quality services.

**Assertion 5: Teachers valued their in-service training more than their teacher preparation programs for teaching children with and without special needs in inclusive programs. Teacher preparation programs in ECE and SPLED must seek to improve cross-fields learning, and programs must realize the importance of student teaching, internships, and teaching practice.**

The present study found that the participants’ teacher preparation programs (as far back as 30 years) and the more recent teacher preparation programs barely activate cross-fields learning in ECE, SPLED, and ECSE programs. When the participants recalled their teacher preparation programs, they said they learned almost everything needed for teaching from their in-service trainings and teaching experiences. Some participants
pointed out that several courses from their teacher preparation programs were helpful for their teaching in inclusive programs; however, after they joined the real world, they realized that the programs needed to provide more hands-on courses and cross-fields learning.

The participants also examined several current teacher preparation programs in ECE, SPLED, and ECSE to compare how much current programs had changed from their own earlier preparation programs. Interestingly, they indicated that the programs had not changed much, and that the programs still needed to add more cross-fields courses; in particular, ECE programs needed to provide more courses about children with disabilities and behavior management. The participants also noted the newness of ECSE, and that it did not provide any ECE courses but was mostly SPLED courses. This suggested that teacher preparation programs in ECE and SPLED need to be reformed to fit students who will teach in inclusive programs.

Each participant pointed to different courses as being necessary for teaching in inclusive programs, but none missed mentioning the importance of student teaching. They discussed using student teaching to improve teacher preparation programs, referring to their experiences of having student teachers in the classroom. They recommended sending student teachers to early childhood settings as early as possible and not waiting until the end of their senior year. For frequency of student teaching, a participant recommended one a year in different settings; that is sending students to regular ECE settings one year and then sending them to inclusive settings the other year. For methods of participation among student teachers in early childhood settings, the participants recommended not sending students directly into classrooms for teaching practice; instead,
allow them to observe classrooms and interview teachers first to learn the teachers’ role and see how they collaborate with other members in the setting.

**Assertion 6:** There was a thread of connection between in-service training and collaborations of the participants in the research site setting. The participants’ reflections about in-service training and collaboration overlapped.

As the participants noted, they learned the most information needed for teaching in inclusive settings from in-service trainings. The formal in-service trainings are usually teachers’ conferences and the topics vary in each conference, such as curriculum, theory, or new regulations. The participants for this study attended several teacher conferences right before the interviews were scheduled. The teachers shared information with each other after attending the conferences. This type of in-service training was seen often.

Likewise, the setting scheduled meetings for teachers and outside staff members. There were two or more meetings every week and the Program Support Staff member attended almost every meeting as the chair. In each meeting, the Program Support Staff member delivered what she and the Director talked about and the curriculum for the week. Teachers brought problems or questions to the meetings. Especially in a meeting for teachers and therapists, there were almost endless questions and answers about children and parents. In addition, the Director introduced reference books for the teachers during meetings. In these ways, teachers developed their knowledge and skills through meetings while at the same time collaborating.

Another source of in-service training in the setting was the role of the Program Support Staff member. One of her tasks was to provide information for teachers when
they needed advice or answers. This also overlapped as a service; the participants observed that she was important in helping collaborate among the teachers. Consequently, teacher professional development (particularly in-service training) and teacher collaboration were inseparable matters in inclusive programs.

**Assertion 7: Collaboration in the setting was so natural so that teachers were not aware that they were collaborating with one another as a team in formal and informal ways. This finding suggests the importance of collaboration among teachers to teacher educators.**

As noted earlier, there were more than two types of teachers, and they had their own jobs to do, while at the same time they needed to collaborate with other teachers. A typical picture of a classroom included a lead teacher, an assistant teacher, a therapist, personal aides, and maybe a student teacher, or a TSS, making it easy to find two or more teachers working together at the same session. Teachers’ team teaching was exquisitely obvious when shadowing the OT. She made visits to each classroom and gave therapy sessions for children with special needs. Whenever a child needed to work within a classroom curriculum, the OT and the lead teacher collaborated to help the child meet the goal for the activity. The OT had her own goal for the child from an occupational perspective, and the Lead Teacher had her own goal for the child within the curriculum; however, when they worked together, each goal merged to meet the child’s needs and learning.

When the participants were asked to tell how they collaborated with other teachers, they pointed specifically to teacher meetings, the mentor system, peer observation, and other informal ways (e.g., email, chatting) in which they collaborate.
There were collaborations between different teachers, such as between lead teachers and assistant teachers. Teacher collaboration was not just helping each other, but also sharing knowledge and skills drawn from different experiences and backgrounds. While being interviewed, the participants often mentioned the importance of collaboration and they recommended that a course on collaboration be included in teacher preparation programs in ECSE.

**Assertion 8: Due to the differences between teachers, conflicts happened even while teachers collaborated with one another. Teachers in inclusive programs must manage conflicts with other teachers.**

The participants reported conflicts with other members in the setting, and they always tried to resolve them right away. The most frequent conflicts in the setting were between lead teachers and the therapists because of their different approaches to teaching children with special needs. The Director also mentioned conflicts with outside agencies, caused by differences such as backgrounds, philosophies, or work units. The solutions were direct discussions about the matter, using intervention if needed.

The participants made recommendations for avoiding conflicts and collaborating better in inclusive settings for novice teachers. All participants mentioned being open-minded and flexible; admit differences, and remember that everyone’s goal is the child. Next, the participants noted the importance of good communication skills. The way teachers communicate with others is a key to avoiding conflicts. Do not be afraid of asking questions or saying ‘I do not know’, and do not be afraid to challenge oneself. The participants noted, “We have to keep learning from one another regardless of our backgrounds because we are just one big collaborative team for our children.”
Implications

Although significance is given to inclusive education, little programmatic attention is directed to the teachers who work in early childhood inclusive programs and their education. Some evidence indicates that early childhood professionals are not adequately prepared in pre-service for working with children with special needs enrolled in inclusive programs (Chang, Early, & Winton, 2005; Early & Winton, 2001). Moreover, the body of teacher education and professional development research is relatively small and inconclusive (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). Although scant research has been done on inclusion, some research has examined important matters of inclusive programs, such as collaboration, as a cornerstone of high quality inclusion (Hunt, Soto, Maier, Liboiron, & Bae, 2004). The numbers are still not encouraging; information about early childhood preparation for teachers working with children indicated that only half of all programs require a course in the education and care of young children with special needs (Maxwell, Lim, & early, 2006). Teachers in inclusive programs need more courses about children with special needs because specialized instruction is an important component of inclusion and a factor affecting child outcomes (Odom, et al., 2004).

The present study contributes to understanding descriptive details of inclusive program such as teachers’ identity, the definition of inclusion, ECE and SPLED practices, teacher professional development, and their collaborations in inclusive programs. Through the perceptions and experiences of the six participants in this study and the analysis of their experiences, this study has generated insights into how teachers in an inclusive program can come from diverse backgrounds of knowledge and skills, apply
them appropriately for teaching children with and without special needs, and cultivate beneficial collaborations.

**Inclusion**

- Teacher educators should pay conscious attention to the lead teachers’ roles in inclusive programs: that is, a developmental teacher for children with special needs and a teacher for typically developing children.

There was not only a difference of background between therapists and teachers but also a difference of background among the lead teachers. The scenario was not one in which ECE teachers taught only with typically developing children and SPLED teachers taught only children with special needs. That is not the true meaning of inclusion. The lead teachers in this study had either ECE or SPLED backgrounds taught children both with and without special needs in an inclusive program, while therapists met the specific special needs of certain children. The therapists had special training: occupational, physical, speech, and vision therapy. Lead teachers, however, did not have adequate training when they arrived at the setting if they had only a degree in either ECE or SPLED. As other research pointed out, early childhood inclusive education is one area of insufficiency (Chang, Early, & Winton, 2005). Teacher educators need to encourage improved curriculum that considers both ECE and SPLED contents for teachers to meet their extended roles.

- Inclusion takes so many different forms that a single definition of inclusion does not exist. The meaning of inclusion varied by type of educator. Teachers in inclusive programs need to be exposed in diverse contexts to children of all abilities.
This generalization was not supported in the present study. However, research suggests that the definition of inclusion varies (Guralnick, 2001; Schwartz, Sandall, Odom, Horn, & Beckman, 2002). The therapists who had more experiences with children with special needs defined inclusion more flexibly, while the lead teachers defined inclusion very firmly because their only experiences with children with special needs excluded children with severe disabilities. Therefore, all teachers need to be exposed to the contexts with children with various abilities.

- Teacher preparation program in ECE and SPLED should merge at some points because inclusion takes issue with inadequate course coverage in key content areas.

Forty percent of teacher preparation programs in ECE do not require a course in the area of working with children with special needs (Chang, early, & Winton, 2005), and only ten percent of the programs require a course for working with children who are bilingual or have limited English proficiency (Early & Winton, 2001). Some individuals still believe that inclusion occurs only when children with special needs are in classes with a significant ratio; for instance, children with special needs must represent 5-6% (Odom, 2000). This was different from what the participants in this study discussed. The ratio of children with special needs cannot affect whether to access inclusion or not. No matter how many children with special needs are involved in a classroom, all children have a right to receive appropriate services to meet their goals. To meet the children’ goals, early childhood teacher educators should provide the inclusive education criteria. There is no boundary between inclusive and non-inclusive programs because almost every class has at least one child needing special care. Therefore, to implement inclusion,
cross-learning in ECE and SPLED should promote high quality early childhood education for children with all abilities.

**ECE & SPLED Practice in the Inclusive program**

- School administrators should actively support a balance between ECE and SPLED practices to promote and implement inclusion.

One of the difficulties when implementing inclusion is to persuade parents that inclusion is not only for children with special needs but also provides high quality early education for typically developing children. Rafferty and Griffin (2005) reported that families of children with special needs generally view inclusion favorably. If inclusive programs are inclined toward SPLED, they are more likely to alarm parents of typically developing children. Teachers are required to provide proper services for all children in a classroom, not merely those with special needs. In other words, typically developing children are not only resources for children with special needs as peer models, but they also have to receive a high quality early childhood education.

- Early childhood inclusive programs should consider hiring teachers with ECE degrees because the programs prepare teachers to apply developmentally appropriate practices for young children with and without special needs.

Viewing education broadly, early childhood inclusive programs are also included in early childhood programs. None of the participants of this study had an ECE degree, although one is studying to acquire it. Traditional special education programs, which were originally built on an extension of special education designed for school-aged to
preschool children, is still affecting the hiring of teachers in that school administrators place greater value on teachers’ knowledge, skills, and practice of SPLED, deemphasizing the uniqueness of early childhood education. Some research has advocated for strong connections between high quality early childhood inclusion and professional development (Buysse & Hollingsworth, 2009). This suggests that there should be teachers with knowledge, skills, and practice in both ECE and SPLED, and that school administrators should not downplay the value of ECE in inclusive programs.

**Professional Development**

- With the evidence from this study, teacher preparation programs in ECE and SPLED should double-check the current curriculum of their program; does it qualify teachers to meet the needs of teaching children with and without special needs in inclusive programs?

Although there is a growing number of an early childhood inclusive program, it is critical that professional development activities targeting ECE and SPLED, as well as specialists, incorporate quality inclusive practices in efforts to improve program quality (Buysse & Hollingsworth, 2009). Some teacher preparation programs are making some progress in serving children with special needs in inclusive programs, such as bridging ECE and SPLED, or offering ECSE or dual majors. However, the majority of current teacher preparation programs have not changed much over time. The participants reported that they relied largely on their in-service trainings for what they could not learn within their degree programs. Currently, early childhood educators require a complex understating of child development, early education issues, and children with special
needs (Sheridan, Edwards, Marvin, & Knoche, 2009). However, resources for professional support are limited, and the accountability for children’s outcomes is high. Therefore, teacher preparations programs in ECE and SPLED need well-constructed curriculums for potential teachers in inclusive programs. Early childhood educators face the challenges of developing quality educational programs for young children with a diverse mix of abilities, as well as diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. The programs of the past which overlooked the diversity of children must now investigate various approaches for teaching in inclusive programs. It does not mean that teacher preparation programs can or should provide 100% of the knowledge, skills, and practice for teachers—that is impossible. However, teacher educators need to acknowledge the reality of current inclusive programs, and to expose students in early childhood education to diverse contexts of children with all abilities.

- As teachers highly valued and relied upon their in-service training, it is necessary to evaluate the quality of in-service trainings and to reach a consensus on the dimensions of the training that define high quality inclusion.

A recent national survey indicated that workshops were the primary method for delivering training and technical assistance (Bruder, Mogro-Wilson, Stayton, & Dietrich, 2009), which is an important component of inclusion and a factor affecting child outcomes. Since teachers in inclusive programs did not meet all criteria to meet for teaching children with and without special needs from their pre-service trainings, teachers continued to get training through conferences, workshops, in-service presentations, and live or web-based lectures. When research recommended how components of quality inclusion can be incorporated into professional development, it referred directly to
teacher preparation programs. Training in early childhood in-service contexts is comprised of activities specific to early childhood programs, providing specific skill instruction or skill-building content for on-the-job application (Sheridan, Edwards, Marvin, & Knoche, 2009). The decision about whether or not a workshop or conference was good was made by teachers who actually attended the workshop. These workshops or conferences do not always provide high quality training, but may also give false information. It is urgent to determine and to sift carefully through in-service trainings for teachers of early childhood inclusive programs.

- School administrators need to pay more attention to ways of coaching, consultation, and communities of practice so that early childhood inclusive program workforces can provide in-service training as continuing education which overlaps with teacher collaboration.

Coaching and consultation are closely related to each other, advancing early childhood professional development as a voluntary and collaborative partnership between early childhood education professionals (Hanft, Rush, & Shelden, 2004). Communities of practice have been used to support professional development in a variety of settings (Bray, Lee, Smith, & York, 2000), and include organization-specific members or a mixture of agency-employed teachers and external facilitators. They require an expert facilitator with relevant experience and practical wisdom who can help the group ask questions, connect and build ideas, provide useful resources, and stay on task (Kennedy, 2004). These three methods—coaching, consultation, and communities of practice—are accomplished through teacher collaboration, and their partnership is characterized as a bi-directional way of communication. However, teachers consider these three methods as
relatively short-term and involving small scale learning, so it is easy to overlook them as important resources of professional development. School administrators and teachers should advocate and actively support and sustain these in-service trainings in actual settings.

- This study provides recommendations for teacher preparation programs which the participants suggested in their interviews. According the participants, ECE programs need to be improved more than SPLED programs in terms of inclusion.

  ➢ Need more practicum, internship, or student teaching

  ➢ Time for the practicum, internship, or student teaching is critical; send student teachers to real settings more often, earlier in their college years, and for longer periods

  ➢ Not only send student teachers to real settings to practice teaching, but also encourage them to observe and interview different types of teachers

  ➢ Offer more hands-on courses

  ➢ Offer more behavior courses in ECE programs

  ➢ Need more individualize focused curriculum in ECE programs, including more courses about specific disabilities in children

  ➢ Need to create courses in collaboration, team-teaching, or co-teaching
**Teacher Collaboration**

- Collaboration between teachers and other agencies is one of the key points to successful inclusive programs. Teacher preparation programs should create courses in collaboration among teachers, parents and families. In addition, early inclusive programs need to realize the important role of collaboration and to seek ways of promoting it among teachers and agencies.

Collaboration is inseparable from implementing early childhood inclusive programs because there is a mixture of groups in inclusive programs, all with the same goal: teaching children with and without special needs to meet their needs. Collaboration is a cornerstone of effective early childhood inclusion, and ECE and SPLED teachers each bring their knowledge skills, trainings, and perspectives to the team of a collaborative model. Those resources combine to strengthen teaching and learning opportunities, and with both ECE and SPLED expertise, and combining the knowledge, skills, and perspectives makes teachers more effective at meeting the needs of children with all abilities (Dieker & Barnett, 1996). In this aspect, collaboration can be a form of in-service training in early childhood inclusive programs. As such, teacher educators should provide novice teachers with instruction on collaboration and also school administrators should plan various methods of collaboration to promote high quality of inclusion.

- ECE and SPLED teachers experience conflicts while working together in the pursuit of educational equity amidst a climate of school accountability, and teacher educators can offer novice teachers more experience by exposing them
to real programs and allowing them to experience ways that nurture conflict resolution.

Conflicts are subordinate to collaboration among teachers in inclusive programs, and conflict does not have to be negative. With urgent and proper solutions, conflict can produce learning different perspectives. To derive positive outcomes from conflict, teachers need to investigate different knowledge, skills, and approaches. Although teachers are all different, they have a similar drive to meet the children’s goals. Teacher preparation programs can help novice teachers to recognize differences that provide opportunities to widen their horizons as much as possible.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

As early childhood inclusive programs have become a primary service option, inclusion in early childhood education has included diverse topics such as professional development, collaboration, quality of inclusive programs, teacher’s perceptions and attitudes toward inclusion, and inclusive program practice. The findings of this study foster the need for further studies about following topics:

- This study asserts that none of the participants had ECE degrees to represent the general education side of inclusive programs, and teachers with SPLED backgrounds did not focus only on young children with special needs but instead those from birth to 21 years old. It questions the quality of early childhood inclusive programs, since inclusion and early education cannot be accomplished without ECE teachers in inclusive programs. As such, further study is need about
those who work in inclusive programs and their qualifications (including knowledge, skills, and dispositions) for teaching in inclusive programs.

- The academic movement to merge the fields of ECE and SPLED has brought about terms of equity and inclusion as well as federal legislations, but a framework to support this merger is lacking (Darragh, 2007). According to an examination of ECE, SPLED, and ECSE programs by the participants in this study, not much merging has occurred that fosters cross-fields learning between ECE and SPLED. Future studies need to examine current teacher preparation programs in ECE, SPLED, and ECSE to access the extent to which early childhood teacher preparation programs are including early childhood special education content and experiences as part of their core course and practicum requirements and in SPLED and ECSE.

- Since current teacher preparation programs in ECE, SPLED, and ECSE still need improvement, teachers rely on in-service training for specialized instruction and the acquisition of skills needed to teach children with and without special needs. Future studies need to focus on in-service training, providing in-depth descriptions of different types of in-service trainings and the framework for defining the quality of in-service training.

- The setting of this study was affiliated with a large national wide organization that provides services for children with special needs, and the ratio of children with special needs was higher than other settings, leading teachers to place greater value on special education. Inclusion means different things to different people, as
each inclusive setting is different and unique. For future studies, a comparison of different early childhood inclusive contexts is required. By comparing the contexts of early childhood inclusive programs, the studies can develop criteria for early childhood inclusive programs to generate better outcomes and quality programs.

**Limitations and Strengths of the Study**

This case study generated data from a particular early childhood inclusive program. Other types of preschools implement different kinds of inclusive programs. So, the results may not be easily transferable to other early childhood inclusive programs, such as public childcare centers. Qualitative research does not aim for generalization. Another limitation of this study is that it did not include any teachers with ECE backgrounds. Future research can aim to provide in-depth descriptions of ECE teachers in early childhood inclusive programs. Another limitation was that parents were not studied much.

Despite these limitations, this study presented several strengths in terms of gathering in-depth data from the participants and the program. The process of enrolling in the setting one year prior to conducting the study and working as a volunteer helped me to implement this study in various ways. First, with more than a year of experience at the setting, I became familiar with teachers, staff members, children, and even some parents in the setting. This allowed me to generate in-depth descriptions of the setting and the teachers, and also facilitated teacher interviews. Next, for a year, I played in and outside with children, went field trips, and ate with them. Through those activities, I witnessed how the setting implements its early childhood inclusive program. For example, there
was a girl named Janet who has down-syndrome in a classroom where I volunteered. When I met her at first, she hardly communicated with others and was a little aggressive when playing with peers, but I witnessed her development over time.

The other strength of the study is that it used various data sources: focus group interviews, individual interviews, observation, shadowing, and documents. This contributed robustness to the study if a participant indicated something; it could be double-checked with interviews, observations, shadowing, and documents.

**Concluding Remarks**

This study described the reported experiences of teachers in an early childhood inclusive program, working with children both with and without special needs. Teachers also shared their work experiences with other from various backgrounds and in various roles. My study focused particularly on teachers’ professional development and collaboration in inclusive settings.

The findings of this study show that teachers with various backgrounds and roles worked together well in their particular inclusive workforce setting, although the setting was different from traditional school system inclusive classroom settings.

The idea of including children with special needs in classrooms is not a new concept to early childhood educators, but major structural changes in educational practice are needed to make inclusion goals a reality. In addition, teachers with different backgrounds share similar educational goals and recommended practices, making it possible for them to work together in teams.
The term inclusion is often ambiguous and varied. For example, full-inclusion means children are together all the time, no matter what their abilities. Children being present in the regular education classroom are considered inclusion. Mainstreaming is considered inclusion, and so on. Indeed, no matter how one defines inclusion, all teachers without exception need to be prepared with knowledge, skill, and practices to meet the needs of children across all abilities in order to make inclusion effective. The present study contributes to a rethinking of current early education approaches toward collaboration and professional development with respect to methods of instruction, curricular reforms, communication, and team-teaching.
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APPENDIX A

Human Subjects Approval Letter (#31227)
Hi Eunjung,

The Office for Research Protections (ORP) has reviewed the application for the research study noted in the subject line of this email and determined it to be exempt from IRB review. You may begin your research. This study qualifies under the following categories:

**Category 1:** Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods. [45 CFR 46.101(b)(1)]

**Category 2:** Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observations of public behavior unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human participants can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the participants; and (ii) any disclosure of the human participants’ responses outside the research could reasonably place the participants at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the participants’ financial standing, employability, or reputation. [45 CFR 46.101(b)(2)]

COMMENT: Please note the attached consent form, a minor addition was added to inform participants about the follow up interview. Please note, that this attached consent form is the one you are expected to use. Thanks so much.

**PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING:**

- Include your IRB number in any correspondence to the ORP.
- The principal investigator is responsible for determining and adhering to additional requirements established by any outside sponsors/funding sources.
- **Record Keeping**
  - The principal investigator is expected to maintain the original signed informed consent forms, if applicable, along with the research records for at least three (3) years after termination of the study.
  - This will be the only correspondence you will receive from our office regarding this exemption determination.
- **Consent Document**
  - The attached informed consent form is the one that you are expected to use.
- **Follow-Up**

- MAINTAIN A COPY OF THIS EMAIL FOR YOUR RECORDS.
The Office for Research Protections will contact you in three (3) years to inquire if this study will be on-going.

If the study is completed within the three year period, the principal investigator may complete and submit a Project Close-Out Report. ([http://www.research.psu.edu/orp/areas/humans/applications/closeout.rtf](http://www.research.psu.edu/orp/areas/humans/applications/closeout.rtf))

Revisions/Modifications

Any changes or modifications to the study must be submitted to the Office for Research Protections on the Modification Request Form - Exemption available on our website:

[http://www.research.psu.edu/orp/areas/humans/applications/modrequest.rtf](http://www.research.psu.edu/orp/areas/humans/applications/modrequest.rtf)

Modifications will not be accepted unless the Modification Request Form is included with the submission.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you so much Eunjung,

Joyel D. Moeller
Research Compliance Coordinator-Human Participants
Office for Research Protections
The Pennsylvania State University
201 Kern Graduate Building
University Park, PA 16802
joyel@psu.edu
Office#: (814) 865-7957 Front Office #: (814) 865-1775
Fax: (814) 863-8699
[www.research.psu.edu/orp](http://www.research.psu.edu/orp)

The Office for Research Protections is moving to Innovation Park in June 2009. Please visit [http://www.research.psu.edu/orp/moving.asp](http://www.research.psu.edu/orp/moving.asp) for more details!
APPENDIX B

Interview Questions
Group Interview Questions

A. What are your background teaching experiences?

1. Tell me about your teaching experiences in general (both ECE and ECSE teachers).

2. Tell me about your teaching experiences in inclusive settings (both ECE and ECSE teachers).

3. How two experiences are different or similar?

B. What are your aims to teach in general and in inclusive settings?

1. Tell me about Early Childhood Education (ECE) comparing both ECE and ECSE teachers.

2. Tell me about Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) comparing both ECE and ECSE teachers.

C. What is your background higher education?

1. Tell me about teachers’ program (ECE and ECSE separately) in your college.

2. How the teachers’ program helped your teaching in inclusive settings?

3. Tell me about in-service training after you became a teacher?

4. Tell me about your teachers’ program in college and in-service trainings comparatively speaking.

5. What courses can you recommend in teachers’ program in college and in-service training programs?

D. How does inclusive classroom work?

1. What are the concerns when you teach in inclusive classrooms?
2. What are the factors for ideal inclusion in early childhood education?

3. What is your own definition of collaboration?

4. What is the teacher’ role in inclusive settings (in both ECE and ECSE teachers)?

5. What do you expect from other teachers when you work with them in inclusive settings?

6. What do you think about the factors for appropriate collaborative team work?
Individual Interview for Both ECE and ECSE Teachers

1. Tell me about yourself as a teacher briefly (e.g. educational background, what kinds of certificate or degree you have, the year of teaching experiences in general, inclusive setting, and in this school).
   
   (a) Tell me about your theoretical background when you teach in general and in inclusive setting.

2. Tell me about your aim of teaching in general and in inclusive setting.

3. Tell me about your teachers’ preparation program in your college such as courses as far as you remember.

4. Tell me about your expectation for other teachers (ECE teachers to ECSE teachers and vice versa) when you work with them.

5. Tell me about your understanding of special education/ tell me about your understanding of general ECE.
   
   (a) Is there clear boundary for teachers (ECE vs. ECSE)?

   (b) Tell me your opinion about the big differences on ECE vs. ECSE.

   (c) Is the answer # 22 really matter when you teach in inclusive classroom? If yes, how do you deal with the differences?

6. According to your experiences working in inclusive classroom, tell me your suggestions to present higher education for future teachers.

7. Tell me about your own definition of inclusion.

8. Tell me your opinion about knowledge and skills in special education that need for teaching in inclusive settings as a ECE teacher/ Tell me your opinion
about knowledge and skills in general early childhood education that need for
teaching in inclusive settings as a ECSE teacher.

9. Tell me about the most different barrier that you felt with the other field of
study (ECE vs. ECSE).

10. Tell me about the responsibilities on a child with special need.

11. Tell me about your opinion of the ideal collaborative team work with other
teachers.

12. Tell me about your collaborative team work in inclusive classroom.

13. Do you have any difficulties when you work with other teachers? If any, tell
me more about it.

14. How do you put your effort to have appropriate collaborative team work?

15. Tell me about the communicate methods with the other teachers.

16. How often do you share children’s information with the other teachers?

17. Tell me about problem solving method of children you teach.

18. Tell me about problem solving method when you having opinion differences
   with other teachers.

19. When you collaborate with the other teachers, what is the most primary
   concern?

20. Tell me about what teachers need to be success in collaborative team work.

21. If you have anything to add on this interview on inclusion, ECE/ECSE/ and
collaboration, tell me more about them.
Interview Questions for the Director

1. Tell me about your experiences as a teacher and as an administrator.

2. Tell me about your goal or aim to teach children in general and in inclusive setting.

3. Tell me about your school’s goal or aim to teach children in general and in inclusive setting.

4. Tell me about the different role you expect from ECE and ECSE teachers.

5. How does your school view inclusion, and what your school does to pursue it?

6. Tell me about teachers’ collaboration in your school.

7. Tell me about you notice the difficulties for teachers’ collaboration.

8. Tell me about your role as administrator when you notice teachers’ conflict to collaborate.

9. How does your school support teachers’ collaborative team work?

10. Can you tell me about specific stories of teachers’ successful collaboration and about specific stories of teachers’ conflicts on collaboration?

11. Tell me you opinion about teachers’ preparation program in college, and what can you recommend for better program.

12. If you have anything to add on this interview on inclusion, ECE/ECSE/ and collaboration, tell me more about them.
APPENDIX C

Focus Group Interview Guidelines
Guidelines for Focus Group Discussions

1. First, there is no right or wrong answers. I am interested in understanding perspectives about Collaborative Relationships among Early Childhood and Special Education Teachers in Inclusive Classrooms. Teachers’ Perceptions about Their Fields and about Collaborative Teamwork.

2. Second, you should not feel that you have to agree with everyone else in this room if that is not how you really feel. There are five people in this room, so I expect that people will have different views. And it is important that I learn about all of the views that are represented here.

3. Third, I want you to feel comfortable saying good things as well as critical things. I am not here to promote a particular way of thinking about the topic. I just want to understand you as teachers of children with and without special needs.

4. Forth, I ask that you talk one at a time so that I can be sure to hear everyone’s views and get them on tape.

5. Fifth, when you say something, please say your name first so that the person transcribing the tape will know who is talking. You can say, “This is Molly.” Or, “this is Jenifer speaking.”

Promise of Confidentiality

This form is intended to protect the confidentiality of what members of this discussion group say during the course of this study, Collaborative Relationships among Early Childhood and Special Education Teachers in Inclusive Classrooms. Teachers’ Perceptions about Their Fields and about Collaborative Teamwork. Please read the following statement and sign your name, indicating that you agree to comply.

I promise that I will not communicate or talk about information discussed during the course of these focus groups with anyone outside of my fellow focus group members and the facilitators.

Name __________________________________________________________

Signature ______________________________________________________

Facilitator Signature _______________________________________________
APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Form
1. **Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this study is to investigate collaborative relationship among Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) teachers in inclusive classrooms.

2. **Procedures to be followed:** You will be asked to answer about open-ended questions in each interview (focus group and individual interviews). It is possible that the researcher may contact you for a follow up interview if additional information is needed. All of the interviews (focus group, individual, and follow up) will be recorded (audio taping). The audio recordings will be safely stored at the researcher’s place with security code, and only the researcher can access to the recordings, and it will be destroyed completely five years later.

3. **Duration:** Each interview will take about 60 to 90 minutes.

4. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. The interviews do not ask for any information that would identify who the responses belong to. In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared because your name is in no way linked to your responses. For focus group confidentiality, I will not tell others what individual participants said about the contents of the focus group.

5. **Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact Eunjung Choi at (814) 441-5631 with questions, complaints or concerns about this research.

6. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.
You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

_________________________________________  _____________________  
Participant Signature       Date

_________________________________________  _____________________  
Person Obtaining Consent    Date
APPENDIX E

Coursework in ECE, SPLED, & ECSE
## Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education

### Core Courses (15 Credit Hours)

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<td>104</td>
<td>History and Philosophy of Early Childhood Education</td>
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<td>ECED</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>Principles of Child Development</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Children and Youth in urban Schools</td>
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<td>204</td>
<td>Introduction to Education of Exceptional Children</td>
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<td>EDPY</td>
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<td>Educational Psychology</td>
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### Additional Required Courses (48 Credit Hours)

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<tr>
<td>ECED</td>
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<td>Methods and Materials for Teaching Math, science, and Technology in Early Childhood Education</td>
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<td>Methods and Materials for Teaching Language Arts and Social Studies in Early Childhood Education</td>
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<td>PEDU</td>
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<td>Methods and Materials for Teaching Health, Physical Education, and Safety in Elementary Schools</td>
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<td>Methods and Materials for Teaching Creative Arts in Elementary Schools</td>
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<td>Infant Education</td>
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<td>304</td>
<td>Play Activities and Materials</td>
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<td>RDNG</td>
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<td>Teaching Reading in Elementary Schools</td>
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<td>Teacher, Child, School, and Community Interaction</td>
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<td>Planning and Administration Early Childhood Programs</td>
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<td>ECED</td>
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### Suggested Electives (6 Credit Hours)

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## Bachelor of Arts in Special Education
## General Requirements

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<td>ENGL 212</td>
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<td>PEDU</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPCH 115</td>
<td>Public Speaking</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPAN</td>
<td>Spanish Elective</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPAN</td>
<td>Spanish Elective</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Must include at least one skills course

## Core Courses (15 Credit Hours)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDPY 244</td>
<td>Human Development and Behavior</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 204</td>
<td>Introduction to Education of Exceptional Children *</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDFN 220</td>
<td>Foundations of Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDFN 222</td>
<td>Children and Youth in Urban School</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDPY 300</td>
<td>Educational Psychology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Specialization Courses (39 Semester Hours)
**Field Experience in Special Education I**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPED 214</th>
<th>3</th>
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</thead>
</table>

**Field Experience in Special Education II**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPED 314</th>
<th>3</th>
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</thead>
</table>

**Methods I: Teaching, Math, Science, Health, Physical Education for Special Population**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPED 435</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Methods II: Teaching, Math, Science, Health, Physical Education for Special Population**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPED 436</th>
<th>3</th>
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</thead>
</table>

**Introduction to Legal Issues in Special Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPED 305</th>
<th>3</th>
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</thead>
</table>

**Behavior Management in the Classroom**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPED 306</th>
<th>3</th>
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</table>

**Assessment of Exceptional Children**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPED 485</th>
<th>3</th>
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</thead>
</table>

**Vocational Aspects of Disabilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPED 454</th>
<th>3</th>
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</thead>
</table>

**Development of Individualized Educational Programs - IEP's**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPED 411</th>
<th>3</th>
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</thead>
</table>

**Observation and Student Teaching in Special Education - Elementary OR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPED 474</th>
<th>12</th>
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</thead>
</table>

**Observation and Student Teaching in Special Education - Secondary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPED 475</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Other Required Courses (12 Semester Hours)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPLP 312</th>
<th>Language Acquisition</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RDNG 314</td>
<td>Teaching Reading in Elementary Schools</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDNG 315</td>
<td>Teaching Reading in Secondary Schools</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDNG 406</td>
<td>Technical/Corrective Remedial Reading</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEDU 390</td>
<td>Introduction to Adaptive Physical Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 335</td>
<td>Special Topics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Student MUST take four (4) of the courses listed*

**Suggested Electives (6 Semester Hours)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FDNU 318</th>
<th>Child Health and Nutrition</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MATH 393</td>
<td>Theory and Application of Mathematics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDNG 305</td>
<td>Children's Literature</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Program of Study for Early Childhood Special Education (M.A. in Ed. & HD.)

Required Courses

SPED 222 Legal Issues and Public Policy for Individuals with Disabilities 3
SPED 240 Family Support and Guidance in Special Education 3
SPED 260 Developmental Assessment in Special Education 3
SPED 261* Practicum: Methods and Materials for Young Children with Disabilities 6
SPED 262 Formal Assessment of Young Exceptional Children 3
SPED 266 Development of Language and Literacy 3
SPED 268 Development of Young Children with Disabilities 3
SPED 269 Etiology, Symptomatology, and Approaches to Intervention 3
SPED 290 Affective Development and Behavior Management in Special Education 3
SPED 293* Internship: Teaching Young Exceptional Children 6
EDUC 295 Quantitative Methods II: Research Procedures 3
TRED 222 Foundations of Reading Development 3

Total Program Credit Hours: 39

*Field/Clinical Experience

SPED 261: Practicum
Students beginning in the Fall semester should be available to take SPED 261 two half days or one full day per week. Part-time students who are employed in 10-month programs may want to delay taking SPED 261 until the summer semester when they are available during the day for this field experience.

SPED 293: Internship
It is recommended that students be available to participate in the internship four days a week during the Spring semester at the end of their program. This is similar to a student teaching experience, as students need regular exposure to the children at their site before assuming the role of educator. Under special circumstances, students may take the internship in the summer semester.

Infant Special Education Program Plan

Required Courses
SPED 222 Legal Issues and Public Policy for Individuals with Disabilities 3
SPED 240 Family Support and Guidance in Special Education 3
SPED 242 Neurodevelopmental Assessment and Programming 3
SPED 261* Practicum: Methods and Materials for Young Children with Disabilities 3
SPED 263 Developmental Assessment of Infants 3
SPED 266 Development of Language and Literacy 3
SPED 263 Development of Infant with Special Needs 3
SPED 269  Etiology, Symptomatology, and Approaches to Intervention 3
SPED 290  Affective Development and Behavior Management in Special Education 3
SPED 293* Internship: Teaching Young Exceptional Children 6
EDUC 295  Quantitative Methods II: Research Procedures 3
SPED 267  Instructional and Assistive Technology 3

Total Program Credit Hours: 39

*Field/Clinical Experience

SPED 261: Practicum
Students must be available to take SPED 261 AT LEAST TWO HALF-DAYS PER WEEK. Part-time students who are employed in 10-month programs may want to delay taking SPED 261 until the summer semester when they are available during the day for this field experience.

SPED 292: Internship
Students MUST BE available to participate in the internship FOUR DAYS a week during the Spring semester at the end of their program. This is similar to a student teaching experience, as students need regular exposure to the children at their site before assuming the role of educator. Under special circumstances, students may take the internship in the summer semester.
APPENDIX F

Intern Survey Summary (Summer, 2009)
Intern Survey Summary — Summer 2009

Question #1: The orientation I received to Easter Seals Child Development Center was clear and helped me feel prepared for what to expect throughout my internship.

   2 Strongly Agree
   1 Agree
   Comments:
   -- "I enjoyed the first two weeks of meeting with someone to give an overview of the
different topics and discuss important issues that matter most to Easter Seals."
   -- "Everyone was very informative in their presentations and the handouts were
something I could use in my future career."

Question #2: My internship experience at US CDC matched my expectations as outlined in the Roles and Responsibilities document I received upon selecting this placement.

   3 Strongly Agree
   Comments:
   -- "They were spelled out very clearly and definitely reinforced each day."
   -- "Everything matched the outlined Roles and Responsibilities document. It was very
detailed and clear and made choosing this internship a lot easier."

Question #3: How did your internship experience at US CDC tie in with your coursework?

   -- "My experiences here were very appropriate and related extremely well to my HDFS
courses. I especially enjoyed being able to work with children of all age groups, where I
could apply my knowledge from HDFS 428 (Infant Dev.) and HDFS PSYCH 427
(Lifespan theories) and many other courses."
   -- "I believe that things that were once unclear in my coursework were made more clear
through real world experiences such as IFPs and acronyms."
   -- "Many of the courses I took at PSU focused on child development and behavioral
issues. I also took classes that focused on disabilities which was extremely helpful.
However, I believe I have learned the most from actually working with young children
with special needs and experiencing it first hand."

Question #4: What would you like to have done/experienced more of during your internship?

   -- "Read more IFPs, observed more therapy sessions."
   -- "I would have liked to spend more time with the afternoon camp.
   -- "I wish I might have seen more OT work during the 4.5 weeks. Observing Rachel at
work with her kids was fun and interesting as was the Albion site. However, my OT
observations were rather limited to the baby room where I could remain in ration while
the OT worked in the classroom.

Question #5: What would you like to have done/experienced less of during your internship?

   -- "Changing the big kids' diapers — but there's a given."
   -- "There is nothing I would have chosen to do less of because I think everything was a
learning experience even if it was challenging at times."

Question #6. What did you like best or felt had the most value to you?
- "I really liked and appreciated how the staff treated me just like another staff member. I felt as though I was more challenged by this, and learned a lot as well."
- "I liked rotting ratios to experience all the different age groups because each room had a different experience in itself."
- "Being treated as part of the staff – given all the responsibilities and expectations – really helped me "throw" myself wholeheartedly into this experience and get the most out of each interaction."

Question #7. What did you like least or felt had the least value to you?
- "I think the trip to the Alzona site had the least value to me because it wasn’t very informative."
- "As an intern I didn’t like being relied on so heavily for staying in ratio. I have helping out and doing favors, but there were some instances where I felt my services were being taken advantage of."

Question #8. Would you recommend our program to other interns?
All answered yes – no comments

Final Comments/Suggestions.
- "Overall I feel this experience has been great and prepared me for the real world."
- "This experience has been life changing and I now have a great understanding for where I see myself doing in the future."
- "I learned so much during the last few months and I can’t thank you enough for allowing me this wonderful opportunity. I only hope I helped the children of ESCO as well as the staff, as much as you all have helped me. I will miss Easter Seals very much."
VITA

Eunjung Choi

PERSONAL INFORMATION

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Phone: 814 441 5631/ 82 53 767 7349

EDUCATION

BA, Psychology (Minor in Japanese)
Western Oregon University, Oregon

ME, Educational Psychology & Counseling Psychology
Kyungpook National University, South Korea

Ph. D, Curriculum & Instruction (Early Childhood Education & Special Education)
The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, Pennsylvania

EXPERIENCE

2007 – 2010 Library Staff Assistant
Pattee and Paterno Library, the Pennsylvania State University

2008 – 2009 Practicum
Easter Seals Central Pennsylvania: Inclusive Child Development Center