The purpose of this paper is to share the results of multiphase initiatives funded by four separate grants. The projects were designed to improve and enhance collaborative teaching at the secondary level. Each project provided opportunities for increased collaboration between special education faculty, secondary education faculty, and instructional leaders (IHE Faculty). Elements of the initiative included program planning, the inclusion professor model, secondary teacher professional development within local school districts with a roundtable discussion among IHE faculty, and technology tools for collaboration in secondary settings. Findings support the need for more collaborative efforts among IHE faculty and K-12 institutions.

Introduction

Effective inclusion programs for students with disabilities require a culture of collaboration as both special education and general education teachers face a myriad of issues as they implement quality inclusion within the secondary environment. This collaboration has the goal of meeting the diverse needs of students and involves special education and general education faculty, school leaders, and university teacher education programs which provide preservice and inservice opportunities. Both general and special education teachers often have concerns about roles and responsibilities related to collaboration and need the knowledge and skills to collaborate effectively and, ultimately, meet the needs of a diverse population of students. Both general and special education teachers often have concerns about roles and responsibilities related to collaboration. Instructional leaders play a significant role in the collaborative process by ensuring
and evaluating effective collaboration. The purpose of this paper is to share the results of multiphase initiatives designed to improve and enhance collaborative teaching at the secondary level. Each initiative provided opportunities for increased collaboration among special education faculty, secondary education faculty, and instructional leaders (IHE Faculty).

Preparing and Supporting Highly Qualified Special Education Faculty

The No Child Left Behind legislation of 2007 (NCLB) requires teachers to be highly qualified. As the legislation currently stands, the general education teacher must be a content area specialist and must provide initial instruction to all students. This means that all secondary general education teacher must hold certification in the field or subject area in which they are teaching. While there have been several ways for general education teachers to become certified and consequently highly qualified, the legislation poses a significant dilemma for certification for secondary special education teachers. For example, in order for a special education teacher in the state of Alabama to deliver first instruction in a content area, the teacher would be required to hold certification in both a general education content area and in secondary special education. This potential dual certification would legally accomplish the highly qualified teaching (HQT) requirements of the legislation; however, in practical terms is difficult to envision teachers being certified in this manner. The State of Alabama chose a different approach. Secondary special education teachers would serve as consultative teachers within the general education classroom working with special needs students as well as general education students.

The success of this model depends on a variety of factors such as general education faculty preparedness (Friend & Cook, 2007). Murray (2004) surveyed high school general education teachers about areas in which they felt they needed to improve. He found general education teachers needed to provide special educators with better resources related to content, open up communication, share responsibility, ask for ideas and opinions, and prepare instruction earlier.

Collaboration is a shared responsibility, but it can be difficult to enact when roles have not been established or taught in teacher education programs. In fact, a practical look at collaboration between special education and general education teachers generates the following questions such as: Is the general education faculty member properly trained to work with special educators and students with special needs? Are general education faculty members resistant to having another teacher working with them? Do the general and special education faculty have the time for shared planning? Are the instructional leaders supportive of the imperative to collaborate?

The Role of the Instructional Leader

Instructional leaders play a vital role in the success of the consultative model and must provide the resources and support for this approach to work. Instructional leaders need to ensure that the general
education teacher is not resistant to having the consultative teacher in the classroom. Further, they should support the consultative process with effective classroom appraisal and resources to develop effective practices in the classroom.

Although NCLB legislation is supposed to prepare a collaborative teachers, IHE and supportive school leaders can be barriers to preparing and supporting secondary highly qualified special education teachers. The four initiatives in this article sought to improve the collaborative efforts among IHE members and local school districts so that these barriers could be better understood, addressed, and diminished whenever possible.

**Initiative Background**

A small teacher preparation program in an urban area of Alabama secured a series of four grants over four years, each serving as a stepping stone to increased collaboration among local school districts and IHEs. Each ongoing initiative focused on 1) modeling collaborative relationships within the IHE, 2) integrating additional instruction regarding effective teaching strategies for students with disabilities in secondary teacher education courses, 3) requiring special education candidates to take additional courses within the secondary education program areas, and 4) providing inservice to secondary general education teachers, special education teachers, and instructional leaders. The four initiatives were titled: 1) Program Planning: Innovative Secondary Teacher Education Programs, 2) The Inclusion Professor Model, 3) Special Education and Secondary Education: Collaborative Teaching to Promote Inclusive Best Practices, and 4) Secondary Special Education: Preparing Highly Qualified Teachers.

**Initiative 1: Program Planning: Innovative Secondary Teacher Education Programs**

Funded by a small grant from the state department of education the first initiative was in response to the issues related to the outside measures of the effectiveness of graduates in a teacher education program as they worked with students with disabilities. Graduates, as well as instructional leaders, indicated in assessment outcomes that they were ill equipped to work with students with disabilities. Other data from the state department of education suggested that graduates in special education needed more instruction at the initial certification level in special education laws, processes, ethics, and transition. IHE faculty in special education responded to this issue by first evaluating the current plans of study for teacher candidates in special education initial certification programs. After collaboration with the state department of education division of special education services and the secondary education faculty within the university, IHE special education faculty added a new course to the plans of study. The new course integrated components identified by stakeholders as critical to the preparation of effective special educators. The essential topics included ethics, roles and responsibilities of the special education teacher, special education law, policies and procedures, and secondary transition. The stakeholders also recommended that the
course be offered to secondary education candidates as an elective at the graduate level of study.

In addition to the new course, the stakeholders recognized and identified a need for candidates in secondary education initial certification programs to have more knowledge and skills related to working with secondary students with disabilities. The state standards require that all general education candidates take only one course in special education. IHE faculty agreed to the Inclusion Professor Model as an emerging solution to preparing secondary education candidates to work more effectively with students with disabilities. The Inclusion Professor Model was implemented to enhance candidate preparation in all areas within the teacher education program. One special education professor modeled best practices in collaboration and consultation in conjunction with other IHE faculty. The guiding principles reflected the NCLB Highly Qualified Special Education Teacher definitions.

The Inclusion Professor helped undergraduate and graduate students develop greater knowledge of collaborative and consultative practices. This was accomplished by modeling best practices through co-teaching, guest lectures, on-line modules, and technology. The Inclusion Professor worked with secondary faculty who taught instructional strategies to candidates in the secondary education program. The possibilities were limited only by the imagination and innovation of the parties involved.

The Inclusion Professor was a member of the special education higher education faculty who received a three hour course load reduction for the school year as a means of compensating for the numerous collaborative and consultative functions that were performed in multiple classes in secondary general education courses. Contributions by the Inclusion Professor enabled candidates to develop greater knowledge of collaborative and consultative practices. The secondary faculty were introduced to the Inclusion Professor Continuum (See Figure 1).

The Inclusion Professor collected data using a simple chart (See Table 1). Typically the Inclusion Professor met with the secondary faculty member and together they decided the special education topic that best aligned with their scheduled topics and course objectives. In addition to the topical decisions, faculty collaborated regarding the diversity of the candidates in each course, including teaching experiences, field experiences, and progress in the program area.
Figure 1: Inclusion Professor Model

Table 1: Inclusion Professor Activities Documentation

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Lesson Plan
“Elements of a Fable”

Grade: 8/2nd Period/Literature (2 teachers)

Course of Standard: 8th grade Literature 5
The student will explain the distinguishing characteristics of odes, ballads, epic poetry, historical documents, essays, letters to the editor, and editorials.

Instructional Objectives: The student will review fables and identify the major elements of the genre.

(5 minutes- 1st teacher) Introduction:
1. Review the types of literature—odes, ballads, epic poetry, historical documents, essays, letters to the editor, and editorials.
2. Show examples of each type of literature.
3. Review why we have different types of literature
4. Explain the purpose/objectives for the lesson.

(15 minutes- 2nd teacher) New Content
1. Define fables. (Dr. M)
2. Introduce vocabulary (Dr. C)
   a. use a strategy for learning new vocabulary (The Notebook Paper Method)
3. Introduce “personification” and “morals” (Dr. M)

(15 minutes- both teachers) Guided Practice
1. Use a short fable like “The Cat and the Mice” and have the students use a “Turn to Your Partner and...” to pick out the elements within the fable.

(15 minutes- both teachers) Independent Practice
1. Using a Think, Pair, and Share activity for independent practice.

(5 minutes- 2nd teacher) Closure/Feedback
1. Let some students share their results on the Think, Pair, and Share activity
2. Review the elements of the fable and relate to new “Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian”

Resources needed:
Examples of different types of literature
Sample of the Notebook Paper Method of Learning New Vocabulary
Worksheet for Think, Pair, and Share Activity
Slide for Turn to Your Partner and... activity
The following topics are examples of topics integrated within the Secondary Methods Courses:

- Attention Deficit Disorder with/without Hyperactivity
- Learning Strategies: Helping Students be Independent Learners
- Instructional Strategies for Teaching Subject Area Content to Students with Disabilities
- The General Education Curriculum: Access for all Students
- Assistive Technology: Let’s go on a Webquest
- Co-teaching Models within the Secondary Classroom

In addition to the above, the Inclusion Professor presented mini-workshops for faculty, staff, and candidates in all program areas with the school entitled The Inclusion Spotlight. An example of a topic for an Inclusion Spotlight was “Strategies for Handling Seizure Disorders in the Classroom”.

Anecdotal information related to the Impact of the Inclusion Professor Model included the following; 1) Collaboration between secondary and special education faculty was emergent and improving; and 2) Secondary faculty were feeling more confident about their knowledge base of special education and were beginning to include information without the direct assistance of the Inclusion Professor.

Initiative 2: Collaborative Special Education and Secondary Education

For the second initiative, special education, instructional leadership, secondary education faculty, and local school faculty established a collaborative model for meeting the needs of students with disabilities. Collaboration among higher education and local public partner schools produced the development, training, implementation, and evaluation of a collaboration model at the secondary level. After developing a collaborative model, the higher education faculty implemented the model by providing an overview of evidence-based practices in co-teaching. Higher education faculty then collaborated with school leaders and teachers to plan and co-teach a lesson. See figure two for a lesson sample.

Following this component of the model, the faculty in higher education observed special education and secondary education teachers co-teaching using one of the evidence-based co-teaching models. This initiative provided “best practices” findings to school leaders, general education and special education teachers, and candidate interns within higher education. One unique feature of the grant was the inclusion of the Instructional Leadership faculty and school leaders at each partner school. This concept provided an added dimension to the scope of collaboration at all levels. The success of any collaborative effort depends on the leadership team of the school.

Initiative 3: Special Education and Secondary Education: Collaborative Teaching to Promote Inclusive Best Practices

The third initiative was an extension of the successfully completed previous initiative and was created to improve and enhance collaborative teaching at the sec-
secondary education levels. This grant allowed IHE faculty members the opportunity to collaborate with school superintendents, school leaders, special educators, and general educators in two surrounding school districts. IHE faculty members developed a training module targeting the roles of the secondary school leaders in facilitating cooperative teaching between special educators and general educators. Resources included the "Models of Collaboration Middle School" CD developed by the Alabama Department of Education (ADOE) and other evidence-based practices. Faculty also introduced, demonstrated, and provided initial training of web-based tools utilized to facilitate the collaborative process in the secondary school environment.

One of the outcomes from the activities from this grant was the recognition that instructional leaders needed to be more informed regarding the collaboration process. The results of post evaluations were shared with the school district superintendents who disseminated the information regarding the training to interested groups. The summaries included suggestions for future professional development. Some excerpts are:

1. Were the objectives for today's session adequately explored?
   - All responded with "yes"
2. Were the roles of a proactive administrator adequately discussed?
   - All responded with "yes"
3. Were the roles of the secondary collaborative teacher clearly explained?
   - All responded with "yes"
4. Were the five strategies that promote collaborative teaching adequately dealt with?
   - All responded with "yes"
5. Were the five models of collaborative teaching clearly explained?
   - All responded with "yes"
6. Did you find the planning pyramid and Dieker planning form beneficial?
   - All responded with "yes"
   - "Absolutely yes!"
   - This model will help teachers become better organized to meet the need of children
7. Did you find the information provided regarding technology tools helpful?
   - All responded with "yes"
   - Yes and innovative
   - This is something I would like to use in my classroom
8. What additional items should be considered in future workshops?
   - More on co-teaching planning
   - Consider developing a workshop related to how administrators can change attitudes and habits of teachers
   - Great job!!
   - Great job!
   - Wonderful workshop
The third initiative confirmed the need to focus on secondary special education teachers.
Initiative 4: Secondary Special Education: Preparing Highly Qualified Teachers

This initiative was a reaction to the call for systemic change in teacher education by the Alabama Department of Education, Division of Special Education in the preparation of secondary special education teachers. To that end, the researchers embarked on an aggressive agenda to evaluate current collaborative teaching practices in the specified service area and determined future directions for the teacher education preparation program.

Candidates in the Graduate Level Collaborative Teacher program currently take multiple courses in the general education program areas of study. However, after evaluating the existing special education methods course for preparing secondary education special educators in teaching basic reading and mathematics skills, it was determined that candidates in the Alternative and Traditional Masters’ programs would benefit from additional coursework in these two critical areas. To enable them to meet the critical needs of secondary students with disabilities, an additional course was created and added to the existing programs of study.

Below are listed the outcomes at each phase.

Phase 1
IHE faculty in special education:
• Integrated evidence-based reading and mathematics content into secondary special education teacher education preparation programs.
• Identified course objectives and state standards to include in a new basic reading and mathematics course.
• Participated in professional development in teaching evidence-based best practices in reading and mathematics including Alabama Reading Initiative Training.
• Identified course requirements, activities, and resources in building the new course.

Phase 2
IHE faculty in special education:
• Identified current practices in collaborative teaching in secondary education through the use of a survey instrument.
• Explored the preparation of highly qualified secondary special education teachers as content area specialists and/or prepare highly qualified secondary general education teachers with expertise in delivering services to students with disabilities.
• Created a panel discussion event to include all stakeholders in special education, secondary education, and the schools of arts and sciences.
• Summarized findings and disseminate to the Alabama Department of Education, Auburn Montgomery Schools of Education, Liberal Arts, Sciences, and to professionals in the field of special education at two international conferences and a state conference.

IHE Special Education Faculty are Alabama Reading Initiative Certified through the Department of Education. Supported by Auburn Montgomery, the IHE faculty attended the 2010 Council for Exceptional Children Convention and Expo to identify resources for the new course. In addition, IHE also attended professional development sessions at the
Preparing Highly Qualified Teachers...

conference to aid in building the new course.

IHE in Secondary Education and Arts and Sciences were invited to attend and participate in the panel discussion. Issues and trends in secondary education, special education, and highly qualified teachers were presented to the panel in the form of a slide show before the discussion to provide background information for the participants. The panel discussion was facilitated by a neutral third party. The roundtable allowed a frank discussion about the needs and future of the secondary program.

Conclusion

Conversations among special education faculty, secondary education faculty and instructional leaders over the years mainly consisted of giving direction and informing them of new mandates. While those conversations meet the needs then, the move to improve and enhance collaborative teaching at the secondary level will change the purpose of the conversation.

As this report has shown, confidence, collaboration, focus on secondary education teachers, and inclusive best practices all are ingredients needed for increased collaboration among special education faculty, secondary education faculty, and instructional leaders. With the mixture of the fore mentioned ingredients the needs of diverse students can be meet. Now is the time for us as educators to join hands and fight for an environment that supports secondary collaboration at every level. The alarm clock is ringing loud and clear, are you paying attention to the sound?

References


