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### A Qualitative Study of an Interprofessional **Collaborative Practicum Cohort**

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#### INTRODUCTION

- Interprofessional education (IPE) occurs "when students from two or more professions learn about, from, and with each other to enable effective collaboration and improve health outcomes" (WHO, 2010). While IPE with a healthcare focus has been around for years, literature regarding IPE in the school setting involving speech-language pathology (SLP) and special education (SPED) is sparse. Online database searches using the key words "interprofessional education," "interprofessional collaboration," "special education," and "speech-language pathology" yield only a few studies.
- In the Special Education and Communication Disorders department at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, an interprofessional practicum experience was developed to address the need for more research and to teach collaboration to future school-based professionals.

#### **METHODS**

- Five SLP graduate and five SPED undergraduate students worked in pairs to provide language and literacy intervention in a university clinic once per week for one semester.
- A qualitative approach was used to analyze focus group data at the end of the semester. Students responded to 11 questions about their experience (e.g., what they learned, what they liked/disliked, what barriers they
- A thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was conducted by the first two authors to determine predominant themes within the

#### Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006): The first

author transcribed the video recording of the focus group using Microsoft Word. The first and second authors then individually analyzed the transcription data and generated initial codes for utterances. The two authors reviewed and defined codes together, resolving any disagreements through discussion. Codes were grouped and then categorized into themes. After three rounds of analysis and discussion, the team identified the three main themes; Learning, teamwork, and barriers. (See Figure 1.)



Figure 1.



# **IPE and the Team Dynamic:**

For speech-language pathology and special education students, working in a <u>team</u> was just as important as working interprofessionally.

#### **TEAMWORK**

 "I would just say ... supporting each other is probably the biggest thing." -SPED undergraduate student

#### INTERPROFESSIONAL LEARNING

 "Now I feel like I have like the tools to ask important guestions to people in different disciplines." - SLP graduate student

### **PREPARATION**

 "That very first month, I was like, I have no idea what I'm doing ... so just maybe having ... more examples of how to do cotreatment or maybe seeing what that looks like." - SLP graduate student

#### RESULTS (See Figure 2.)

Three themes were present in the 155 participant utterances that were coded as meaningful:

- Learning
  Related to interprofessional knowledge and skills
- Related to team skills
- · Related to self-reflection
- Teamwork
- Preparation (barrier)

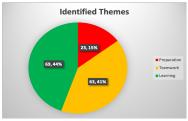


Figure 2.

#### **DISCUSSION**

Through an interprofessional collaboration between SLP and SPED students in a clinical practice setting, students not only gained knowledge and information about the other's profession but also learned strong teamwork skills.

- · Comments coded as "Learning" demonstrated how students learned skills from each other's disciplines such as behavior management strategies, how to use an alternative or augmentative communication device, how to use readability when selecting materials, and data collection methods.
- Comments coded as "Teamwork" included statements that students enjoyed having interactions with other students and supervisors to solve problems, work with clients and families plan treatment, self-reflect, and share the roles and responsibilities of co-teaching. Students indicated the relationships formed with their student partners were very important to them and would last past graduation.
- Comments coded as "Preparation/barriers" overwhelmingly indicated a desire for more preparation prior to the clinical experience, including more time to learn about the client, plan for co-teaching, meet with supervisors, complete necessary HIPAA training, and arrange their schedules.

Students also stated the skills learned throughout this collaboration built a stronger foundation for providing better services to their future clients and better relationships with future co-workers in a school setting.

#### CONCLUSIONS, **LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

- Qualitative data indicated students learned interprofessional and general team skills that could apply to single-discipline or multi-discipline teamwork
- Our pilot study was limited by a small convenience sample and the lack of a control group.
- Future studies could utilize more participants and compare students paired interprofessionally with those paired in their
- Quantitative data could be gathered to evaluate team skills and student learning.

#### **SELECTED REFERENCES**

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World Health Organization (WHO), (2010). Framework for action on interprofessional education & collaborative practice. Geneva. Switzerland: WHO.