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INTERVENTION MEETING

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AGATE A‑C

INTERDISCIPLINARY, CROSS CULTURAL COLLABORATION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING: A PANEL PRESENTATION

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>>: Hello, everyone.

Hope everyone had a great lunch, and hope you're ready for more sessions this afternoon.

My name is Julie Mitchiner. I'm from Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., and I'm the codirector of the deaf and hard of hearing infant toddler and family liaison collaboration. It's a long name for a certification that we have in the graduate school at Gallaudet University. Program has been in place for 10 years, and the program prepares individuals to work in different disciplines as it relates to families and children from ages birth to three.

The heart of our program is the interdisciplinary approach, and that is the heart and goal of our program. We include individuals from different disciplines, social workers, counselors, people in education, speech‑language pathologists, audiologists and those are all disciplines that are heavily involved in early intervention. And it's important to be able to work with people in different disciplines and understand what contributions they bring to the table.

We have different students from different backgrounds who go through our one year program. It starts if the summer. We have hybrid courses. We are on campus for three weeks and the remainder of the program is done online. Individuals can work full time while they're going through the program.

>>: The program runs through the fall and the spring, and then we have a final summer session, and that is when students will graduate from the program.

The program requires a capstone project, and students can pick their discipline based on what gaps they see that need filled in their area. And we use all of our research from that one year as a part of the capstone. I would like to introduce our panel members. There are some current students and some former students on the panel. We also have an instructor, actually the founder of the program, that's Dr. Marilyn Sass‑Lehrer and we're going to have each panelist talk about their experience with the interdisciplinary approach and the cross cultural approach, meaning incorporating men and women, people who are deaf, hearing, people from a variety of racial backgrounds and we felt like this would be a good time to show that model of learning and teaching when working with infants and families.

>>: You can see the benefits on the screen of the interdisciplinary and cross‑cultural collaboration.

I will now introduce our panelists. I'm not sure if one of our panelist is coming. He's still at lunch. He may join us a bit late. He is a current IFT student, a Ph.D. student in the clinical psychology program at Gallaudet. Then we have Lynette Mattiacci, and she is an early intervention teacher at the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf and she is a current student.

Then we have Marilyn Sass‑Lehrer, one of the founders of the IFT program, and she is a professor emeritus and she teaches our courses.

We have Emily Wojahn who is local in Denver. She graduated from the program, and she is in a new position as the Colorado Regional Hearing Resource Coordinator, and that's at Pikes Peak. She is in the Co‑HEAR which is the Pikes Peak region of Colorado.

I want each to talk about their experience with the interdisciplinary approach and cross cultural as well.

>>: From your perspective, either as a student or an instructor, what are the benefits and challenges to collaborative interdisciplinary and cross cultural learning and teaching? And is there personal experience or example of interdisciplinary or cross cultural learning that you can share with the audience.

Time permitting, we will turn it over to the audience for questions. However, we're working on a very tight schedule here, so we'll start with our panelists.

>>: You're going to have to remind me of the time because otherwise this could get very long.

>>: Hello, everybody. I'm going to talk and rely on the interpreter to help communication. Thank you.

I want to start by kind of going way back to when I first became an early intervention provider myself with a background in deaf education. My preparation was pre‑K to 12th grade. So when I graduated, I really knew nothing or a little bit about everything maybe. That's really big jump.

And after I taught for four years in middle school, I thought I'd really learn something about teaching and decided it was time to move on to something different. And I began working as an early intervention specialist and quickly realized that I knew nothing about a lot of things. And I was extremely dependent upon my coworkers to help fill in all the gaps that I had in my knowledge.

So, for example, I was missing information of very early development.

I was missing information on how to work with families, parents. I had no clue how to work with a parent. I didn't understand or had no information about parent‑child interaction. I didn't know enough about language acquisition, either in ASL or spoken language. I could barely read audio gram to explain to a parent what is meant and on and on and on and on.

And I was very open to ‑‑ my personality is very open to telling people I didn't know about these different areas, and depended so much on parents, particularly parents who were deaf themselves and who had lived experiences of being deaf and then becoming a parent raising deaf children. I learned so much from them.

Parents whose cultural and ethnic background was different from my own. My coworkers who were speech language pathologists taught me a ton. The counselors ‑‑ I was fortunate to have a counselor in our program who helped teach me how to develop some listening skills and how to respond to families in ways that were empathetic. So from that very beginning as an early intervention specialist, I just knew that it took a village, it took a team, a team of people who had expertise in a lot of different areas in order to, you know, accomplish the goal of providing families and children with the best opportunities and resources that they needed to succeed.

So that experience colored my view of what the preparation of an early intervention specialist should be and how I saw the early intervention team working together. And so I wanted to, like, present that.

So the benefits are clear, I think, from my perspective, and sometimes it's hard to explain to other people those benefits ‑‑ the benefits. But for me it's crystal clear that we all need to work together.

There are challenges, and some of the challenges that I experienced were individuals who were guarded about their professional expertise, and they felt that they were the best person to provide a particular service to a family and were less willing to really collaborate and interact in ways that would teach ‑‑ where we could exchange information about our individual craft.

I think it's really important for ‑‑ and I saw this with colleagues that I worked with and other people would have shared their stories with me ‑‑ that there are some people on a team who are less willing to recognize that what they ‑‑ what they don't know. So you really ‑‑ it's really important to be on a team of people who are open‑minded, who are flexible, who are generous, who are interested in developing relationships, and who are comfortable working together on a team.

Let's see? What else did I want to share in my one minute left.

So for the past ten years, I can't believe it's been ten years ‑‑ I've been involved with this infants, toddlers, and their families program. I have been a coinstructor with someone else from another academic discipline, and the value to me has been immeasurable. I've been able to expand my horizons.

So psychologist, counselor, social workers, they have expanded my knowledge, expanded my horizons and really expanded my entire framework and understanding of what we all need to bring together in order to provide effective services for families and children.

>>: High, everybody. My name is Emily. I finished the ‑‑ (laughter). I finished the infants, toddlers, and their families certificate program in June this recent June. I was a classroom teaching working with kindergarten kiddos who were deaf and hard of hearing at a residential School for the Deaf so my experience going through the IFT was expanding that knowledge. I also had been trained in kindergarten through 12th grade education setting and then entered that the world of early intervention. Dipped my tow in the past and I'm thankful for the opportunity to have gone through the IFT program. As Julie mentioned, I'm a regional coordinator for hearing services for children hero zero to three years old in the southeast region of Colorado. Collaboration is critical.

I as an educator have had to depend on the audiologists and the occupational therapist and all of the other professionals who come into my world every day because I feel like a lot of what Marilyn was describing in her experiences is where I am right now. Learning to read the audiogram again and explain it carefully and accurately to the families.

The IFT program definitely prepared me for that but now all of a sudden I'm out in practice and I'm like what did they tell me on that online course six months ago. But having the resources available and the attitude also of, I don't know, can you help me, that's a huge benefit to allowing that collaboration to take place. Attitudes and beliefs is something we talk about through the IFT program, and examining our own and how that impacts practice. I don't think I'm answering a question right now. Just talking.

Personal experience for interdisciplinary and cross cultural learning and teaching from within the program. From the start the program is set up to bring together people from different fields. It's also set up to force you to work with people who maybe have a different area of expertise than you. One of the challenges with that is finding that common ground and then finding the time, especially as everybody is a busy professional and out in the working world, finding the time to come together and get the work done or checked in with each other to make sure there's progress made. I'm sure many of you can think of a team you were a part of where time was a challenge to come together and also a challenge to give yourself that space to admit I don't know and how do I move forward with what humility.

Within my personal experience, one of the things I love about this new role is the opportunity to collaborate with people from all different fields. I work with a community center board in Colorado Springs that really embodies a teaming approach and embodies a coaching approach which has been a fun learning opportunity for me where we come together and all the people who are working with a specific family and some of these kiddos are very complex so we can come together and have discussions and set up opportunities to co‑teach where two providers will go out to the family at the same time and provide that support to the family. I really appreciate that opportunity to learn from the providers while also supporting the families.

>>: [away from mic]

>>: From the IFT program. We did several projects including case studies. So we would read a case study with a partner. I'm thinking of one case where I'm in Colorado and my partner is in California so figuring out a time where I think her experience was in social worker or school counseling and then we read the case study of the family and developed family centered out comes and child centered out comes for an IFSP so that's an example where we were working together as part of an assignment but then using that experience in my everyday life.

>>: Trying to decide if I should stand up near the podium. I think the podium might block me. So I might stay here but stand up.

Hi, everybody. I have a similar experience to Emily. I graduated from Gallaudet with a bachelors in early childhood education. That was for K ‑‑ kindergarten and up. And also with a preschool teacher for many years and I find myself kind of directed towards early intervention because I wanted to make an impact to help these families find the right track for them. So I went back to school for my master's degree trying to find the right track and there was nothing locally. So I decided to expand my horizon and look at education. I knew I needed the information still of where to go and what to do and Gallaudet had specifically for children and famous in this collaborative program and I felt like it was a good fit for what I was studying as a doctorate student.

So I had two tracks within my Ph.D. One was credited and so I chose the master's degree program that was credited that I'm currently in and doing studies for.

I also decided to go back to school to get my EI as an early interventionist teacher for the deaf. So it's a home based and center based services. We do both. Most of the learning is actually done on the job as you are there. You're paired up with someone and you learn on the job.

The really cool thing about EI is that we really are a team model. There are so many providers getting together to provide support and to work together. We're working with audiologists, SLPs, teachers of the deaf and it's very similar to the IFT program.

So currently I have a cohort program with many students that are across the country that we're working with. Our current program has ‑‑ includes audiologists, SLPs, we include interpreters, teachers of the deaf and psychologists in California. I have another current IFT student in the room so we do counseling as well. It's a big, diverse group and all our groups meet with the IFT program and we are paired and do paired instruction as again cross disciplinary.

>>: So sometimes I'm working with someone from the Department of Education and I'm working with Marilyn. So you're paired up with somebody in a different program but coming together with a different perspective. All of it is online. We do have a lot of discussions online. I'm limited on time so I'm trying to summarize some of my points.

I'm thinking about the questions too. I just don't want to miss anything so I have to glance at my notes here and there.

Like I said, with early childhood we have a lot of people we're working from, teachers coming from different fields, people coming from different perspectives and learning how to apply those skills in the field. With early intervention we do home visits and we typically are partnering with others so we can see the skills they're implementing and build on the strategies that they are using. So we can teach signing and vocabulary. That way while they're teaching spoken language so coming at it two with two different roles but still focusing on the families.

Sometimes it's also we have to leave our personal biases at the door. We all have our own opinion, and in the profession it means sometimes we have to leave those at the door and we have to focus on the child and the family that we're serving and to support that family. We also have to have mutual respect for each other. Emily admitted sometimes you don't know and you have to ask the questions and our program emphasize that is so much. In the case studies and projects, when we're pairing up and working together we bring what we have to the table. And we're focusing on that family as a whole. I do have an entire page of notes but I'm going to pass it on because I have more to say but maybe we can mention that later.

>>: Sorry for getting here late. I had a reason for being late but I'm not going to share that with everyone.

Anyway ... when I look at the IFT certification program and the collaborative efforts that happen there, like, was mentioned earlier, we have students from all different backgrounds. I was in a cohort previous to this, and I was in the Ph.D. program as well. I asked if I could put the program on hold until after I finished my Ph.D. so I could join up with another cohort.

I always remember my very first‑class the ‑‑ there were two attorneys and one educator in the class, and I was thinking why are lawyers here. What kind of benefit are they going to get from this course. I realized all of the policies, the political change that can occur, working in a hospital with children and families and learning what to do in those situations, and I realized that there really is benefit in working with the attorneys and the educators in their different disciplines in order to work collaboratively toward a mutual goal.

In our courses, we took social work courses, psychology courses. That's what I've been studying so that was pretty easy for me working with SLPs, audiologists. I remember there was one theory we were working on. It was the Bronfenbrenner and we were focused on different perspectives on how a speech language therapist looks at a child. Then we brought the psychological perspective in how we look at a child then other perspectives focusing on language and see how that played to so many different disciplines and how we could work together with that one theory. We've learned from other fields and we see what other challenges are out there.

And we're just primed for our field once we get out there, but we have to stop thinking about what we have been working on. We can't just think about our different discipline. We have to unpack those things, and we have to work with different disciplines like if we're working with an dogs and they are working with ‑‑ with an audiologist and they're working with children who are deaf or hard of hearing, it's important to incorporate their perspective as well.

In group therapy psychologists will work with a group. However, we oftentimes are working with our clients one on one, and we don't focus on the family, and we need to focus on the family and the system.

As far as my personal experience goes, I work at a psychiatric hospital now. I'm an intern there. And I'm using my consultation skills on a daily basis when I'm working with different groups of people. What I've learned in the IFT program has helped me work with other students, and often sometimes other students resident feeling comfortable in their positions but I feel comfortable because I understand the different perspectives.

Unfortunately we are out of time. Thank you so much for sharing your experiences. As you can see. It's important to have that interdisciplinary approach cross cultural approach in your work. Always keep an open mind and look at the different perspectives and what others can contribute to the best interest of the child and the family. If you have any questions, we'll be here and we'll be available. Thank you.

(End of session.)