

## ARTICLE

## Strengthening a Collaborative Paradigm: Building an Interprofessional Skill Set in Emergent Teachers

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### ABSTRACT

Recent literature casts a vision for teacher work that calls for strengthening the skill needed for reciprocal relationships with families and for interdisciplinary work with other professionals. With this vision in mind, investigators asked, “How does a research-informed assignment that asks candidates to engage as learners with families and community, shape the development of emergent teachers?” The subsequent study was a secondary analysis of the existing data drawn from assignment submissions of 47 graduate pre-service teacher candidates in their final semester of clinical practice at a private university in the Northwest region of the United States. Conventional content analysis resulted in five themes. Teacher candidates grew in their knowledge of learners and in their understanding of families. They applied parental knowledge to classroom design and practice. They gained insight into unique needs and concerns of diverse communities. Shifting assumptions and convictions regarding working with families were evident. How these key findings align with and are informed by School-Based Family Counseling principles is discussed.

### KEYWORDS

family engagement,  
pre-service teacher,  
School-based  
Family Counseling,  
interprofessional

### Introduction

News headlines in the state of Oregon reported that the state’s public-school classrooms are in crisis (Severance, 2019, June 11). An extensive state research report entitled, *A Crisis of Disrupted Learning: Conditions in our Schools and Recommended Solutions* aligned with the stories we have heard from teacher candidates, in-service teachers, and principals. The report led with this observation: “Students are coming to school with complex needs, students and educators don’t feel safe, and schools and districts don’t have the resources to address the root causes of these incidents” (Autio, 2019, p. 3). The complex needs of Oregon’s classrooms seem to be pushing some teachers, who seek to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for all students, to a point of despair.

Solutions posited in the Oregon report specifically call for teachers to act by increasing engagement with families and by accessing more support from mental health and counseling professionals (Autio, 2019). Contemporary experts recognize that one step forward in addressing the complex nature of today’s classroom is a strengthening of the notion that the education of students is

a shared responsibility of school, home, and community partners (Epstein, 2018; Gerrard & Soriano, 2013). Classroom teachers need support from specialized professionals to address the multiplicity of needs represented in their students. Additionally, they need families to work in partnership with them to help children thrive. This shared commitment, in action, holds potential to make a difference in student success and well-being.

Such partnerships have strong theoretical support. Alfred Adler is an early voice speaking about the critical connection between child psychology, the home, the school, and outside influences. In *The Education of Children*, Adler (1930) speaks about the importance of teachers and families working together on behalf of the developing child.

Similarly, Bronfenbrenner (2000) proposed that the primary engine of human development is the interplay between an individual and the people and things in one's immediate environment. Furthermore, the qualities that characterize those people and things will impact that interplay, and thus the developing individual as interactions regularly occur over time.

Gerrard and Soriano (2013), editors of *School-Based Family Counseling: Transforming Family-School Relationships*, write that "...family systems theory recognizes the interdependence of various systems in our society--be they the school, the family, or the community context--as well as the vulnerability of the child depending on these systems for his/her development" (p.9). These system theories can provide a deeply-rooted basis for partnerships designed to support the healthy development of children.

With this interdependence in mind, this paper results from the author's desire to engage, as teacher educators, with the School-Based Family Counseling (SBFC) professional community. As noted above, teachers are urged to access more support from specialized mental health and counseling professionals. The SBFC approach is an example of the kind of collaborative work that offers hope for strengthening systems, including teacher preparation, that can facilitate student success. SBFC professionals, and others who seek to apply systems theory to [school](#) and [family](#) in order to support the healthy development of children, may benefit from a better understanding of a shift in thinking that has emerged in recent literature around the work of the professional teacher. This new perspective holds promise to improve teachers' work with families and their interprofessional work on behalf of students.

We begin by discussing current literature related to this paradigm shift in thinking around the definition of professional teaching. We, then, share what we are learning from efforts to prepare new

teachers to enter the classroom with the disposition and skill to collaborate with all stakeholders that have influence in children's lives. We provide details of a research-based project designed to engage teacher candidates with the families and communities of the learners in their clinical practice classrooms. We then provide a brief description of a qualitative study exploring candidate assignments produced during the project; the findings of which indicate that dispositions of emergent teachers can be shaped when they approach families as critical partners in student success. Finally, we will explore how key findings from this study connect to and are informed by the SBFC approach.

### **Influential Voices for a New Direction**

Literature has emerged in the field of teacher development during the last eighteen months (Darling-Hammond & Oakes, 2019; Epstein et. al, 2019; Epstein, 2018; Smith & Sheridan, 2019). With a clear and influential voice, these scholars have provided insight and given new meaning to the role of the professional teacher. They present a vision of a classroom teacher who is a member of a collaborative team. The teacher has an authentic curiosity and a hunger for knowledge from others on the team. These professionals seek knowledge of family diversities, community resources to support students and families, and knowledge about students' experiences, both in and outside of school, and how some of those experiences may impact a student's healthy development. The teacher's commitment to reciprocal relationships is an endeavor to better meet the complex needs of today's classroom. These relationships include school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, school nurses, as well as relationships with families.

### **Epstein's enduring call**

Exceeding four decades, the pioneering scholarship of Epstein has been an influential voice in how teachers collaborate with the families of students (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Epstein et. al, 2019). Early work talked about involving families in the educative experience (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Epstein, 1987). Epstein indicates that earlier definitions of teacher as a 'professional' focused on the specialized knowledge and pedagogical skills of teachers as compared to 'non-professionals' (e.g. parents, community members). This perspective assumed that teachers had the most important knowledge regarding the education of children.

As the research progressed, the involvement perspective shifted to an engagement paradigm. Epstein (2018) explains that steady research on how teachers collaborate with families and community have led to an up-dated definition of the work of the teaching professional:

"Research over the past 30 years, however, redefines 'professional' as a teacher who understands that education is a shared responsibility of home, school, and community. A professional teacher knows how to work effectively with students, parents, other family members, community partners, and colleagues to promote student learning, positive attitudes, attendance, and other important outcomes. Of course, the professional teacher also retains unique and valued competencies in subject matter knowledge and teaching skills". (Epstein, 2018, p. 401)

Epstein emphasizes that educator knowledge in the area of collaboration is evolving and encourages readers to give attention to both historically recognized principles and to "emerging issues" (p. 401).

Under the heading, "New Directions," Epstein (2018, p. 401) identifies partnerships as a core competency of a skilled classroom teacher. This recent work features a shift in thinking. In a compelling statement on what it means to be a professional teacher for the 21st century classroom, Epstein writes:

"It is imperative for new teachers to understand family diversities, community resources, student experiences in and out of school, and how to use all available resources to maximise student learning and success. This knowledge and these skills are measures of teachers' professional skills and standing". (Epstein, 2018, p. 401).

This redefinition of what it means to be a 'professional' teacher presents a new way for teachers to perceive their role in the education of students. This *new direction* asks pre-service teacher candidates and in-service teachers to re-position themselves as part of a team of professionals and non-professionals who work collaboratively on behalf of students' well-being. This newly crafted professional persona casts a vision for teacher work that calls for strengthening the skill needed for reciprocal relationships with families and also for interdisciplinary work with other professionals.

### **Re-positioning the role of the teacher; involvement to engagement**

Darling-Hammond and Oakes (2019) assert that "old-style notions" of working with families continue to be in practice today (p.64). Parent involvement typically includes parents coming to school for back-to-school night and for the traditional parent-teacher conference. These two occasions, where teachers report how the child is doing, represent Darling-Hammond and Oakes (2019) conception of parent involvement.

Zeichner, Bowman, Guillen, & Napolitan (2016) talk about family involvement in ways that go beyond the "old-style-notions," however the relationship remains one-sided; schools telling

families what they need to know about their child. They state:

"These involvement activities create opportunities for school staff to share their knowledge and expertise with families and community providers about school expectations, specific school curriculum, ways to support children's learning outside of the school, effective communication with teachers, and ways that families and community-based organizations can support teachers and the school as a whole". (p. 278)

Note the emphasis on school staff sharing their knowledge with family and community.

In contrast, Darling-Hammond & Oakes (2019) share a teacher development exemplar where "...the aim is to help teachers create relationships with families and learn from their knowledge of the child as well as their experiential *funds of knowledge* more generally" (p. 64).

Zeichner et al. (2016) share that this different approach re-positions the teacher as one member of a team; a teacher-family-community *engagement* approach. They say that this approach comes from an entirely different perspective. Instead of focusing interactions on the expertise of the education professional, this approach stresses the knowledge that families and other members of the community can impart to teachers. Teachers become a collaborative partner with the family and educational specialists in the mutual sharing of knowledge to improve student outcomes. This shift in approach to *engagement* with families, aligns with Epstein's (2018) call for a re-envisioning of professional teaching as a shared responsibility between home, school, and community. Enacting this work of shared responsibility calls for a new set of collaborative skills.

### **Interprofessional work; a skill set needed for professional teaching**

Today's adept teacher can routinely interact with not only families of their learners, but also social workers, school counselors, school psychologists, school nurses, special education specialists, as well as other skilled individuals that target particular student needs like occupational therapists, speech specialists, and autism specialists. Miller, Coleman, and Mitchell (2018) liken educational interprofessional collaboration to the kinds of teaming that has emerged in the last couple of decades in the field of medicine to accomplish integrated healthcare on behalf of patients. While teachers and families currently participate in Individualized Education Plans (IEP's) for students with documented learning disabilities, they may arrive at those meetings without skill development around effective collaborative teaming. This work is relational and employs goal-oriented collaboration. Miller et al., (2018) notes that interprofessional work requires training and cross disciplinary experiences. They contend that "pre-service educator training is needed to foster collaborative teaming between school

professionals from a variety of disciplines” (p. 357). The intended outcomes of this type of work in pre-service coursework and/or field practica would fuel motivation to collaborate and offer real-life interprofessional collaboration that would strengthen family-school engagement and produce improved student outcomes.

Smith and Sheridan (2019) affirm that an integral part of developing teachers for work with families and community professionals is skill building, particularly in collaborative practices. They note that the field of consultation has much to offer in the area of effective communication, collaborative planning, and strategies for problem-solving and continuity in relationships. Effective collaboration is rooted in knowledge and understanding of “who” one is collaborating with. As our classrooms have become increasingly diverse, teacher knowledge and understanding around the cultural contexts and special needs of students are central to the application of collaborative skills. Smith and Sheridan (2019) stress that, “To expand cultural understanding and dispel assumptions and biases among teachers and parents, teachers must take an active role in creating a dialogue with parents” (p. 130). Smith and Sheridan’s meta-analysis indicates that training increases teacher candidates’ confidence and empowers them with knowledge and skill to consult and collaborate with families.

### **An updated vision for professional teaching**

These contemporary voices form an image of a professional teacher that leaves the solitude of the classroom to eagerly gather knowledge and information that will support the complex needs of learners. This teacher has cast off any notion that they are the sole authority of their classroom domain. There is professional satisfaction in applying the insight provided from others on the team. The teacher is developing skills that will strengthen these reciprocal relationships, and in doing so, is growing as an effective and professional teacher.

The challenge of such a vision of professional teaching is that it requires the unlearning of old and well-established paradigms. There are barriers to overcoming the notion that the teacher is the sole expert on a child’s learning and they merely share their expertise on how the child is doing with home and community. One part of the solution is to begin with brand new teachers and establish, at initiation, a more powerful vision for a professional teacher.

### **Family-Community Engagement Project**

The literature is clear that when schools collaborate with families and community there is a

significant impact on student achievement and well-being (Beltran, 2012; Christenson & Reschly, 2010; Epstein, 2011; Harris A. & Goodall, J. 2008; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hiatt-Michael, 2010). However, research consistently reports that teachers, both in-service and pre-service, not only feel unprepared to do this aspect of their work but often report feeling a lack of confidence associated with collaboration with families (Bruine, Willemse, Haem, Griswold, Vloebergh, & Eynde, 2014; Epstein, 2018; Molina, 2013; Smith & Sheridan, 2019; Zeichner, Bowman, Guillen, & Napolitan, 2016). While faculty and teacher candidates say that work with families is important and necessary for effective teachers, coursework devoted to the development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions is lean (Miller et al., 2018; Smith & Sheridan, 2019). In teacher preparation, the demands of a crowded curriculum and pressure to prepare candidates for high-stakes exams pushes this important, but ostensibly less urgent curricular outcome to the back burner (Buchanan & Buchanan, 2019). Few programs dedicate a course to family and community engagement. Rather this coursework is often infused across the program with varying levels of fidelity and accountability (Epstein, 2018).

The authors are invested in the on-going development and use of a data informed, sustainable model of practice in teacher preparation designed to support teacher candidates as they develop the dispositions and skills needed to work skillfully with families and communities on behalf of all learners. It was evident to us that there was a need to add a family/community engagement element to the teacher education coursework at our own university. To this end, we set out to gather strong examples of current practice that required few resources and could be broadly implemented (Sleeter, 2017; Amatea, 2009). We then developed and supported the implementation of a teacher candidate task that we called The Family-Community Engagement Project. Four of our colleagues agreed to incorporate the project into a one-credit spring course designed to support candidate practicum.

### Description of the assignment

*The Family-Community Engagement Project* was completed while candidates were in their second semester of clinical practice. Candidates were instructed to select and use one of three activities, adapted from experts in the literature (see Figure 1). Each of the three activities included an opportunity for teacher candidates to engage as learners with the family and/or community. Candidates were then asked to reflect on the knowledge gained from families and/or the community, and on how that knowledge can be used to support learning in the classroom. Candidates were encouraged to particularly consider aspects of the community that represent diverse, minority, and/or under-represented populations.

Figure 1

Community Knowledge Activities as presented to teacher candidates in the spring of 2018.

**Community Conversations** (Sleeter, 2017)

Select five adults who live in the neighborhood where you are teaching. Tell them that you are a teacher candidate in the local school and that you have been encouraged to get to know the community being served by the school. With permission, ask questions such as the following:

- What do you see as the main assets of this community?
- What are people in this community especially good at doing?
- Describe how you would like to see the community ten years from now.
- What assets could help the community reach this vision?
- What barriers will the community face in working toward this vision? What is being done about those barriers?
- How can the school serve the community more effectively?

Reflection: Write a concise account (600-900 words) of the knowledge you have gained and how you can use this knowledge to support learners in your classroom. Candidates are encouraged to particularly consider resources of knowledge in the community that represents diverse, minority, special needs, and/or other underprivileged populations. Include an exploration of your own personal assumptions about the community and the culture of families, and how engaging with families has shaped those assumptions.

**Neighborhood Walk** (Sleeter, 2017)

Spend some time walking around the neighborhood of the school where you are teaching, observing and listening. If possible, have a child or youth give you a tour. Pay attention to things such as geometric shapes in building designs, kinds of plant life and rocks that are present, styles of music played, kinds of games children/teens play, and so forth. Then make a list of things in the neighborhood you can build upon, as examples or lessons, to help teach what you are being certified to teach to learners from this neighborhood. You are encouraged to particularly give attention to aspects of the neighborhood that may inform their work with diverse, minority, special needs, and/or underprivileged populations. In your report, try to identify at least twelve things you can draw on from the students' neighborhood experience to help learners better understand concepts in your subject area. Include a brief reflection on how time in the neighborhood has shaped your own personal notions and assumptions about the community,

Report (600-900 words):

1. What you saw
2. Related academic concepts
3. Ideas for curriculum
4. Reflection on how your notions about community have been shaped by this experience.



### **Family Conversations** (Amatea, 2009)

Arrange and make time for one to three conversations with parents of learners in your classroom. Listen to parents/caregivers share about the specific strengths and talents they have observed in their child. Ask the caregiver about other helpful things they may like to share about working with their child or their family. Reflection: Write an account (600-900 words) of the knowledge you have gained and how you can use this knowledge to support learners in your classroom. Candidates are strongly encouraged to consider visiting with families that represent culturally diverse, minority, special needs, economically challenged, or traditionally underprivileged populations. Include a brief reflection on your own personal assumptions about the community and the culture of families, and how engaging with parents/caregivers has shaped those assumptions.

Note: Candidates (n=47) selected one of these three activities and submitted a report/reflection during the second semester of clinical practice.

In each of four different classes, candidates posted their reflections to the university online learning environment. These were assessed by the course instructors who, in this case, were also cohort leaders for the candidates in their course. Instructors reviewed the reflections for evidence that candidates were engaged in the idea that families and communities hold important knowledge for the teachers of their children and that they might be able to use that knowledge on behalf of the learners in their classroom.

### **Scholarly Inquiry**

At the end of the semester, we were curious to know if this newly implemented coursework was meaningful to candidates. In the 47 candidate reflections, we saw an opportunity to engage in a study designed to support an increased understanding of the potential impacts of participation in *The Family-Community Engagement Project*. With an aspiration to strengthen pre-service teacher preparation, we set out to explore how this assignment supports the development of teachers who are ready for today's classrooms. Teacher candidate reflections from the *Family-Community Engagement Project* (n = 47) were analyzed to explore the question, "How does a research-informed assignment that asks candidates to engage with families and communities as learners, shape the development of emergent teachers?"

### **Method**

A qualitative content analysis of candidate reflections (n=47) was implemented to explore the research question. Content analysis, as an autonomous method (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Graneheim, Lindgren, & Lundman, 2017), is appropriate for the qualitative study of various forms of written text, such as the reflections analyzed in the study presented here (Bengtsson, 2016; Elo & Kyngäs, 2007).

Hsieh & Shannon (2005) advise that while conventional content analysis has limitations, it is appropriate for concept development and model building.

**Procedures and data collection.** During the spring 2018 semester, four teacher education professors, at a private university in the Northwest region of the United States, were each assigned to teach the same 1-credit course: MATG 575 Clinical Practicum I: Enrichment Experience. Each of the four professors agreed to develop a collaborative syllabus and course assignments in their Moodle-based course management system. As a part of this six-week course, candidate participants were each asked to select, engage in, and reflect upon one of the three *family-community engagement* activities described above. Teacher candidates posted their reflections to the Moodle course website.

**Participants.** Forty-seven graduate, Master of Arts teacher education students participated in the *Family Community Engagement Project*. These students were completing the final semester of clinical practice in their 36-semester hour teacher licensure and Master's degree program. As illustrated in Table 1, each student is preparing to either teach in a multiple subject, K-8 classroom or a single subject, 7-12 classroom. Four cohorts of students make up the total sample (n=47).

Table 1.

Participants: MAT Graduate Students Class of 2018; Night & Weekend Cohorts (n=47)

Characteristics	Count/Percentage
Gender	
Female	34/72.3%
Male	13/27%
Cohort	
4 Semester	22/46.8%
5 Semester	25/53.2%
Authorization Level	
Multiple Subjects (K-8)	28/59.6%
Single Subjects (7-12)	19/40.4%

### Analysis

This investigation was a secondary analysis of the existing data described above. Conventional content analysis procedures were used to explore the inquiry in this study (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In brief, the process began with multiple readings of the data. Next, exact words from the text that were perceived to capture key thoughts or concepts (codes) were highlighted. Researchers

noted initial impressions as category labels emerged, often directly from the text, that seemed to represent multiple key concepts (initial coding scheme). The emergent categories were eventually organized into 10 to 15 meaningful “clusters”, each representing a large number of codes. Along the way, categories and clusters were arranged into a hierarchical structure of defined categories and subcategories. Clusters were sometimes combined and items that seemed to lack clear definition were dropped. Categorical definitions were further examined as exemplars were carefully drawn from the data.

The two investigators in this study completed the beginning steps of the content analysis individually, including multiple readings through the data and the development of an initial coding scheme. Later steps in the analysis were completed collaboratively: comparing and contrasting conclusions, questioning interpretations, and contending with various ideas until consensus was achieved. According to Creswell (2007), such “debriefing provides an external check of the research” and this is “much in the same spirit as interrater reliability in quantitative research” (p. 224).

## Results

An analysis of the teacher candidates’ reflections revealed that 10 candidates chose to conduct “community conversations,” 12 conducted “family conversations,” and 25 chose to experience a “neighborhood walk.” The qualitative content analysis of the reflections resulted in five themes emerging that provide insight into how teacher candidates were shaped by their experiences:

- Teacher candidates grew in their knowledge of learners
- Teacher candidates grew in their understanding of families
- Teacher candidates applied parental knowledge to classroom design and practice
- Teacher candidates gained insight into unique needs and concerns of diverse communities.
- Shifting assumptions and convictions regarding working with families were evident.

For our purposes here, we discuss how these key findings from the investigation align with and are informed by SBFC principles as articulated by Gerrard & Soriano (2013). The relationship between the findings and the SBFC approach may be of interest to SBFC professionals as they seek to collaborate with teachers on behalf of children and families.

### **Making Connections: Key Findings that are Associated with the SBFC Approach**

*Teacher candidates grew in their knowledge of learners.* Partnering with parents, and skill in consulting parents as a way of focusing on and gaining insight about the learner in the classroom, is

valued by SBFC (Gerrard & Soriano, 2013). Through the *Family Conversations* activity, candidates indicated that they grew in their knowledge of the strengths, talents, and attributes of learners in their classrooms. One teacher candidate wrote:

"By speaking with parents about their student's strengths, talents, and after school activities, I was able to find out (this student) is very involved in taekwondo. He regularly has belting tests, that requires he maintain good grades and excellent behavior in school. He also takes piano lessons. He spends a lot of time helping out his parents with his brother. The level of disability his brother has is very time consuming for everyone involved"(2018 - #9).

Teacher candidates increased in meaningful knowledge about students through consultation with parents.

*Teacher candidates grew in their understanding of families.* Fundamental to the SBFC approach is a systems-focus where the learner in the classroom is seen as a member of multiple systems (Gerrard & Soriano, 2013). Growing in an understanding of the worldviews of diverse families is one way to better understand those systems. Candidates who engaged in the *Family Conversations* activity reported a growing understanding of family values, family priorities and expectations, and preferences in how parents communicate with teachers. One candidate reported: "Both families value education, cultural diversity, and support their children's interests in the arts. LL is musically inclined and PS loves ballet" (2018 - #7). Another teacher candidate shared these words from a parent:

"Of course, we like how well she is doing with schoolwork, but hearing about the kind of person she is means so much to us. One of our most important goals is to raise a kind, thoughtful, respectful, loving and well-loved human being that we can. We believe such traits are vastly undervalued in today's world, but not by us. We do not expect her to be the best, the smartest, the fastest, the most athletic, the most popular, or other such superlatives, but we do expect her to be kind, unselfish, friendly, courteous, thoughtful and courageous" (2018- #4).

Similarly, a candidate who participated in the *Community Conversations* activity stated, "It helped me understand the community more thoroughly."(2018 - #10) Through these activities, candidates increased in their knowledge of the family systems that impact the students in their classrooms.

*Teacher candidates applied parental knowledge to classroom design and practice.* A primary focus of SBFC is advocating for student success in the classroom. The SBFC approach

promotes school transformation, and teachers are in a pivotal position to make small but informed classroom changes that can positively impact learners' school outcomes. Candidates who participated in *Family Conversations* reported that they applied information drawn from parents to classroom design and practice. Parental insight spurred instructional adjustments specific to the needs of individual children and it impacted the teacher's vision for classroom culture. Here are two powerful examples:

"I met with the mother and Student 1 and she shared a couple of things that I had no idea about... First of all, Student 1's team recently won the basketball championship for his division. I used the information about his love of basketball in several ways.... To continue to grow my relationship with him, I began talking about March Madness with him. He was struggling with the 'weekend news' writing assignment, so... together, we took his twenty-minute game and turned it into two pages of descriptive writing".

The teacher candidate added "After hearing from (this) mom, I am reminded all my students need to learn to embrace challenges, because challenges provide opportunities to learn.... She tells me when things are too serious, he becomes stressed. It's so important to realize academic stress can occur at any age, so to support learning and create a calm, encouraging classroom community"(2018 - #39).

Teacher candidates' found opportunities to apply what they learned from parents to improve their classroom practice and their relationships with the students.

*Teacher candidates gained insight into unique needs and concerns of diverse communities.* Gerrard and Soriano (2013) share that many parents, from a variety of cultures, are willing to participate in conversations about helping their child succeed in school, particularly if they feel their perspective is needed and valued. Findings from the above study revealed the formation of candidate insight into unique needs and concerns of diverse communities. For example, one teacher candidate shared:

"One parent wrote: 'The tasks that teachers assign you can explain more with details of the subject, if they could explain things in English and Spanish my student would learn more easily.' I could not help but consider this answer from a parent's perspective. What would it feel like to have your student come home from school with complex assignments in a language that neither of you are highly proficient in speaking? Frustrating, futile, and discouraging are words that come to mind. It also makes me aware that any supports we can possibly offer in a student's first language are valuable

and worthwhile"(2018 - #27).

Advocating for children is a key value of SBFC and this principle can be a unifying factor across cultures and for various stakeholders in the community, including families and school professionals.

*Shifting assumptions and convictions regarding working with families.* Gerrard and Soriano (2013) propose that, while the heart of the SBFC approach is the integrative use of interventions linking family and school, schools are not traditionally structured to make strong use of a systems approach to supporting learners. Candidate reflections indicate that participation in activities where candidates are asked to gain knowledge from families begins to address this barrier. Consider the following reflections:

"Prior to beginning my work with this general demographic (i.e. families from a low-socio-economic background), part of me thought that the parents didn't care as much, because they weren't as present.... I discovered my assumptions were predominantly wrong. While there are, of course, some parents who really "don't care," the majority care more than I knew. In many cases, parents who "weren't present" were often working a lot, to provide for their children, and were doing their very best" (2018 - #2)

"Communicating with families is essential and can determine how you view the child as a whole. We only see our students in one environment and by talking to families and the community you begin to develop a larger picture. When you see the whole child, that is when you are able to tap into their strengths, get them involved in school and create an environment of respect and acceptance" (2018 - #34).

These reflections point to the shifting assumption and a growing conviction that collaborating with families is a fundamental task of teaching. This knowledge may provide a more complete view of diverse learners, sometimes challenging previously held conclusions or assumptions and can shape emergent teachers in ways that align with SBFC values and principles.

## Implications for Practice

### Enhanced pre-service preparation

The recent conversation, presented above, leads us to believe that there is a window of opportunity for a step forward in the movement to build reciprocal relationships with families and interdisciplinary professionals to support the healthy development of learners. To this end, we believe

that professional learning both in-service and preservice, is a priority. Results of Smith and Sheridan's (2019) meta-analysis on the effect of teacher training, both in-service and pre-service, on family-engagement practices, attitudes, and knowledge extend previous research and affirm that teacher development in both pre-service and in-service contexts make a difference in teachers' confidence and level of preparedness to engage with families. Smith and Sheridan (2019) say that "Moving forward, it is imperative that teachers receive opportunities to interact with families during their training experience" (p. 144). Professional development on family and community engagement should be taken from the sidelines and put into action.

### Improved in-service preparation

While all recent literature calls for improved pre-service preparation for effective work with families and students, Epstein (2018) notes that as new teachers begin their in-service careers, they will continue to need in-service professional development to build on their foundational knowledge learned in teacher training and apply it to work with families in their particular settings. "Like pre-service education, in-service education on family and community engagement has been side-lined in most schools and across countries" (Epstein, 2018, p. 404). We wonder what role SBFC professionals might play in the professional learning of those who will collaborate with families.

Consider, for example, the learning that could occur if regularly scheduled school professional development activities were designed to provide teachers and school counselors access to one another and time to share. While time is a significant barrier for teachers, a solution may be in the regular practice of providing in-service time for professional development. The findings above indicate that teachers who engage with families increase in an understanding of the family's unique needs and concerns. Capturing professional development time for teachers to bring needs and concerns to counseling professionals, and for counselors to strengthen the social-emotional skill-set in teachers, holds promise to bring insight and knowledge to both the teacher and the counselor.

### A learner paradigm

All students, regardless of their diverse and complex needs, deserve a safe classroom setting that facilitates growth across the developmental domains of the whole child. In this work we have emphasized the perspective that professional teachers will grow in effective work with students if they engage with a collaborative team as a learner. While schools often refer to a lack of resources, we point to the abundant specialized knowledge that exists in school systems and in the broader

community.

We believe this learner paradigm is something that would benefit all members of the collaborative team, including parents and specialized professionals and that each member of the team (not just teachers) would benefit from skill building that leads to stronger reciprocal relationships. We propose that a way to strengthen support for all children and families would be to facilitate growth in interprofessional skills and dispositions in all members of a school- based interdisciplinary team.

## Conclusion

While this paper began with an account of the crisis of disrupted learning teachers are facing in Oregon, similar challenges can be found across the United States and abroad. As the authors have used an interprofessional lens to explore the outcomes of a study of teacher candidate reflections; inclusive classrooms, that serve all children, need more interprofessional support for addressing students' social/emotional and mental health needs as well as students' academic and behavioral needs. The school community must embrace and engage families, a child's first and most significant influence, if schools are able to successfully facilitate the healthy development and academic achievement of all students. Building a vision for collaborative professional teaching is an important step forward.

## Limitations

The data explored for this study was self-reported teacher candidate reflections. The data is rich with the perceptions and beliefs of the teacher candidates. However, the assignment itself places a particular emphasis on the surfacing constructs. The data lacks the objectivity of a distant observer. While the authors believe the outcomes of the study to have value in theoretically informing teacher education, the reader should take great care and caution in generalizing the results to other settings and locations.



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