

Running Head: SCHOOL/COMMUNITY RESOURCES

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School/Community Resources

3/12/09

EDTE 689: Advanced Seminar in Teaching

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As an educator, I do not function in a vacuum. It would be highly detrimental and incredibly harmful to my mission of being an effective, consistent, reflective, and respectful educator should I feel that I exist in my classroom without the help, guidance and resources from outside of my own classroom. Of course, I am very much aware of this and strive to utilize any and all resources available to me so that I can be the most effective teacher I can be. Polloway, et al. (2008) discusses in his book *Strategies for Teaching Learners with Special Needs* how collaboration with everyone from a student's family to administrators to organizations outside of school is essential to the most valuable teaching process. As soon as I entered the classroom on my first day, I knew that I couldn't go at this alone, so I made a solemn vow to do just the opposite of that. I believe that collaborating with and utilizing all available school and community resources is essential to being the most effective educator I can be.

First, I believe that collaborating with and utilizing all available school resources is essential to being the most effective educator I can be. There are a myriad of resources in my school building that are at my fingertips. First, I am surrounded by a variety of other teachers, all with their own experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, educations, and time spent in the classroom from which I can pull from and seek advice. I have done just that on countless occasions. For example, I have found that my coworkers are an excellent resource for putting our heads together to figure out how to deal with a problematic student we both have and to garner new ideas for effective lessons. I also have my supportive administration team. My Head and Assistant Head of School are a vital resource to me day-to-day for everything from specific student issues, to ideas I'd like to implement, or simply to just blow off some steam. I am dependent on and grateful

for our IEP Coordinator, who I wouldn't have been able to effectively navigate an IEP without. It has been essential to me having a Curriculum Coordinator in the building, who is always willing to help with lesson planning and to observe lessons and help reflect on making them better. With the way that technology is becoming a fundamental part of education, especially special education, I constantly refer to our Head of Technology for everything from computer issues to new ways to utilize reading programs like Kurzweil in my classroom. And then there are our building's related services providers, including speech and language, occupational therapy, and counseling. Having counselors in the building is wonderful not just for students, but their doors are always open if I ever just need an unbiased person to talk to, which can be very helpful in a stressful field such as education. Other resources include our parent/teacher organization, our school board, and even our school's library, which contains a plethora of useful educational materials and resources. Least I mention, however, that one of most, if not *the* most important resource in the school building is the students themselves. I learn and grow from them everyday.

Next, I believe that collaborating with and utilizing all available community resources is essential to being the most effective educator I can be. The resources available to educators do not just lie within the school building. I have learned this by reaching out to and collaborating with community resources since the initiation of my teaching career. First of all, to better educate myself and continue my professional development, I worked towards my master's degree. Continuing education is essential to being a life-long learner and I plan on continuing my education outside of my school for as long as I am teacher. The parents, guardians, families, and communities from which my students come from are vital resources. For one, getting to know my student's

families helps me better understand my students, their backgrounds, and the diverse perspectives that they are bringing into my classroom. But collaborating with families also helps establish more consistent and widespread support for the student so their education does not just stay inside the school walls. There are a multitude of organizations and agencies that exist to support our schools and our students. For example, I have helped create a partnership with my local cable access station to help enrich the professional technical skills for my production students. Agencies like the CEC (Council for Exceptional Children) are vitally important for keeping up to date with current research on my brand of education and the standards from which I must teach. Outside of this, there is also the internet, teachers unions, school districts, and state and federal legislation, all of which are resources for me to utilize. Lastly, my own family is an invaluable resource for me because I have had several teachers within my own family.

As I have illustrated, there are seemingly endless resources available for me to utilize to be the most effective teacher that I can be. However, I know that I cannot sit idly and expect these resources to reach out to me. I have to be an active collaborator and must always keep my relationships within and outside of my school growing so that I can grow as an educator and a resource for my own students.

References

Polloway, E. A., Patton, J. R., & Serna, L. (2008). *Strategies for teaching learners with special needs*. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Ltd.