

Helping Bridge the Communication Gap Between Special and General Educators: Influencing Effective Teaching for Students with Special Needs

David R. Byrd, Ph.D.
Weber State University
Ogden, Utah, USA

Students with special needs are placed in general education classrooms as part of a 'least restrictive environment' (O'Connor, Yasik, & Horner, 2016).

General education teachers are not always aware of ways to help these students (Bruggink, Goel, & Koot, 2015).

Previous research has shown that a communication issues are a major problem between general and special educators (Byrd, 2020; Byrd & Alexander, 2020). Certain patterns have emerged from these studies that can be addressed directly.

This poster gives some suggestions of how to foster greater communication between these groups of educators.

Communication issue	Communication strategy
Lack of communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build relationships (start chatting) • Reach out to the other • Have an open-door policy
Unidirectional communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize in-person meetings • Explicitly request a response with a deadline • Be bold, but not bossy
Your students vs. Our students (territorial issues)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate on lesson plans • Share a blog
Empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand colleague's perspective • Re-think how you listen (non-verbal cues) • Ask questions
The goal of effective communication is to design and carry out effective teaching for students with special needs. This won't happen without planning, cooperation and a little bit of humility on both parts.	
<p>References:</p> <p>Bruggink, M., Goel, S. L., & Koot, H. M. (2016). Teachers' capacities to meet students' additional support needs in mainstream primary education. <i>Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practices</i>, 22(4), 448-460.</p> <p>Byrd, D. R. (2020). Perceptions of the excellent special education teacher's expertise: Informing teacher preparation and development. <i>Journal of the Utah Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters</i>, 96, 123-140.</p> <p>Byrd, D. R., & Alexander, M., (2020). Investigating Special Education Teacher Knowledge and Skills: Informing General Teacher Preparation and Professional Development. <i>Journal of Global Pedagogical Research</i>. http://dx.doi.org/10.33902/JPR.2020059790</p> <p>O'Connor, E. A., Yasik, A. E., & Horner, S. L. (2016). Teachers' knowledge of special education laws: What do they know? <i>Insights into Learning Disabilities</i>, 13(1), 7-18.</p>	