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## INTRODUCTION

**The Problem:** No clear understanding of how Montessori teachers and special education teachers are collaborating to meet the needs of students in special education in Montessori public schools.

**The Purpose:** To explore the ways teachers in Montessori public schools incorporate the practice of collaboration through the identified constructs:

- » *Shared Planning*
- » *Frequent Communication*
- » *Shared Vision*
- » *Mutual Respect*
- » *Joint Trust*

**The Method:** Qualitative, in-depth interviews with 10 Montessori and special education teachers

## OBJECTIVES

### **Established Need:**

- Consistent positive results in research
- Mandates
- Montessori programs

### **Problem:**

- Montessori Public Schools
- Literature Review
- Montessori Method

### **Purpose:**

- Embedded Multiple Case Study
- In-Depth, Semi-Structured Interviews
- Research Questions

## LITERATURE REVIEW

- |                       |                          |   |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|---|
| ▪ Multiple Facets     | ▪ Legal Background:      | ▪ Montessori  |
| ▪ Historical Approach | ✓ IDEIA & NCLB           | ✓ Dr. Maria Montessori                              |
|                       | ▪ Inclusion              | ✓ Montessori Public School                          |
|                       | ▪ Collaboration          | ▪ Special Education                                 |
|                       | ▪ Established Constructs | ▪ Combined: <i>Special Education and Montessori</i> |

## FINDINGS



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Time**

- Organization
- IPLC

### **Integration**

- Deep Collaboration
- Collaboration Map

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# Assessing Collaboration: How Teachers in Montessori Public Schools Incorporate Collaborative Constructs for Students in Inclusion

By: Dr. Dena AuCoin

With the current federal mandates of IDEA for public schools and consistency in research of the positive benefits of collaboration among teachers for students in inclusion, the need to explore the public Montessori inclusion setting created a topic of interest: the study of the collaborative relationships between special education teachers and Montessori teachers in a public school setting.

**PROBLEM:** *The problem to be addressed is the lack of understanding on how collaboration is implemented in Montessori public schools for students who receive special education services in inclusion settings given the documented positive effects*

**PURPOSE:** *The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the ways teachers in Montessori public schools incorporate the practice of collaboration through the identified constructs despite the evident philosophical differences between Montessori education and traditional special education and the demand to support students with special needs.*

**Research Questions:** *“How to teachers in a Montessori Public School build/incorporate \_\_\_\_\_ in collaborative experiences?”*

5 constructs:

- Shared planning, frequent communication, shared vision, mutual respect, joint trust

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## Method:

- Qualitative
- 10 public Montessori schools, special educators & Montessori teachers,
- 2 data sources were triangulated: special educators & Montessori teachers with a check for accuracy & reliability in a field test

## Literature Review:

- A reported 5000 Montessori programs are operating in the United States, which includes almost 500 Montessori schools that function in the public sector
- Over half of public Montessori schools in America have sprung up in the last decade with a continued demand for more (National center for Montessori in the public sector NCMPS, 2013).
  - *1<sup>st</sup> issue of Journal of Mont. Research 11/2015 – 3 of the 4 articles about public school & inclusion*
- In a public Montessori program there is no restriction on enrollment to only those who could have afforded private Montessori. The result is the attraction of a larger than average number of students with special education needs
- Established Collaboration Constructs
  - Shared Planning / Frequent Communication / Shared Vision / Mutual Respect / Joint Trust
- Montessori
  - Dr. Maria Montessori
  - Montessori Public School
- Combined: *Special Education and Montessori*
- Similarities in: Individualization, Self-Care, Prepared environment, Practical life = an ‘Expansion of Philosophy’, not a sacrifice

## Findings:

- Consistency with Research
  - Understood importance of each construct, work as advocates for all students
- Overall misunderstanding of ‘collaboration’
  - Collaboration is not merely working in the same room, or being present in the same room, or participating in a shared activity. It requires dedication and care, with teachers working toward the established goal
- Areas for Improvement
  - Need for Time

## Recommendations:

- Time
  - Organization
  - Inclusion Professional Learning Community
- Integration
  - Deep Collaboration
    - Establishing the relationship as an additional layer to expertise
  - Collaboration Map
    - Used to map steps to build collaborative relationship

## Conclusion:

- “Collaboration is a Process, not Product”
- Inclusion is built on the idea that all students are valuable in their abilities:
  - Children should be considered important members of the community